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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 23 November 1998

Lundi 23 novembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 November 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 novembre 1998

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BIRCHWOOD TERRACE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): For the past 25 years, Birchwood Terrace has been a home for the aged, serving the needs of the residents of Terrace Bay, Schreiber and other communities along the north shore of Lake Superior, enabling many people to spend their golden years in or near their own community. Sadly, as a result of the restructuring of the system, Birchwood Terrace is now closing. The last resident moved out recently.

However, this does not need to mean that this beautiful facility that overlooks Lake Superior must be torn down. The townships of Schreiber and Terrace Bay, along with the McCausland Hospital, have a proposal that will revitalize the building as a health care facility for seniors, which will allow people to remain in or near their own community. This is a wonderful proposal which will keep the community alive and thriving and it certainly deserves our support.

The only problem is that the government of Ontario will only return this facility to the community at the market value cost of the facility, a price that may be substantial and impossible for the municipalities to pay.

What makes this position by the province so upsetting is that Birchwood Terrace began as a private facility and was given to the province as a gift by Kimberly-Clark, the municipality's largest taxpayer back in 1973. In fact, I have a picture here of the plaque that proudly states that this is a gift to the people and the province, and I'd like to send it, if I may, over to the Chair of Management Board to take a look at.

It's difficult to understand why the province, which has decided it has no future use for this facility, will not return this gift to the municipality so it can continue to serve the seniors who have contributed so much to the growth of the region.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Recent economic disasters have put Ontario's and Canada's farm and rural communities in a crunch. Farmers in Ontario are struggling and attempting to address the farm income disaster

which is now making itself felt in Ontario's rural communities on family farms.

Just last week, Ontario farmers and farmers across Canada presented a farm income disaster program proposal that would go a long way to provide a basic level of support required by Ontario farm families. The proposal would allow the program to be made available on an all-commodity, individual farm basis. It will not undermine the value of existing farm safety net programs. It is considered green in the world trade arena. It will narrow the gap in assistance available to farmers in the United States and other competing countries like Canada. It will help the farmers in Ontario to compete. But most of all, it will protect the farm community's contribution to Ontario's economy now and in the future.

In order to work, the farm income disaster program needs a commitment of new money from the Harris government and his Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in order to preserve farm families in Ontario. The Ontario farm community and farm leaders have heard the minister's praises; they have heard praise from the Premier and from the Ontario rural caucus of the Tories. Praise is not going to help farmers when their incomes have gone through the cellar and they have been given no ideas of this government's intentions. Good intentions will not buy seed for next year's crops.

ADOPTION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): I rise today to acknowledge November as Adoption Awareness Month. This is the month to celebrate families that have opened their hearts and homes to children who need a permanent and loving home in which to live and to increase awareness about adoption and children who are waiting to be adopted by a loving family.

It's a privilege to stand here today and express my gratitude to all the mothers and fathers who have adopted one, two or more children. I have seen at first hand the joys that adoption brings to a family.

One of my assistants, who has been with me for many years and who was working with me at the time she adopted her son, has told me many times that she has never regretted for a moment her decision to adopt. She has since given birth to a daughter and feels very blessed and lucky to have them both. When she looks at these children, she sees them not as her adopted son and birth daughter but rather as her son and her daughter equally — equally loved and cared for and equally wanted. She

encourages everyone, anyone who loves children and wants to experience the joys of raising a child, to consider adopting. "You will never look back," she says. She knows in her heart that she did the right thing.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): As members of this House will know, we have concluded very brief public hearings on the apprenticeship legislation, Bill 55. The message to the committee members was very clear: The vast majority of participants spoke against the proposed changes, ironically even those presenters who were there at the request of Minister Johnson and the Harris government.

Here are the problems they outlined: The majority of changes to the apprenticeship system will be made in regulation by either yourself or your cabinet colleagues; you're stripping out the minimum educational requirements; you're creating a potential health and safety problem related to training standards and supervision; and you mean to undermine the employer-employee relationship that is the foundation of this system.

The presenters, employers and workers alike, also gave a clear message: This bill will not be a job creator but will in fact be a job killer. They said that you're going to make it harder for our workers to compete nationally and internationally and you're decimating the world-class apprenticeship program. The Premier heard this himself from apprentices when they toured the Air Canada Centre construction site earlier last week. They told him their concern about how this change will rip apart the system.

I hope the government will reflect on the presentations they heard at their very limited public hearings on this bill and will withdraw this bill entirely from consideration at their earliest opportunity. If they won't kill this bill, then I hope they will at least give amendments their most serious consideration, because passing this bill as it will be unacceptable to apprentices and employers and will do nothing to further the growth of skilled trades in Ontario.

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NATIVE ISSUES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I want to take this opportunity to report to the House what my colleague Len Wood and I found as we travelled on the James Bay coast over the past constituency break.

We found communities from Attawapiskat to Fort Albany to Kashechewan where families are forced to live in homes 30 per house. We found communities where buying the basic groceries in order to put food on the table is so expensive that people don't have that option and in fact are eating foods that are not good for healthy lifestyles. We found communities where fuel costs were exorbitant to the point that people could not afford to heat their homes. We've seen situations, such as in Fort Albany, where students are in a school that is substandard, that used to be the residential school, which we all know brings many bad memories.

We know that the federal government has dropped the ball on this issue. We know that the feds have not risen to the challenge of finding solutions for our First Nations people along the James Bay coast and other parts of Ontario to resolve many long-standing issues that need to be dealt with such as housing and other issues of importance.

I want to call on this provincial government to work with us, the NDP caucus, to go to the federal government and negotiate better agreements and better understandings on how both our levels of government are able to work with the First Nations communities to find long-term solutions to what are unique problems along the James Bay coast. We've seen that precedent in Manitoba where the Filmon government has negotiated with the feds. We ask this provincial government to work with us. Take some leadership and find solutions so those people can have hope like you and I have in the province of Ontario.

HAMILTON TIGER-CAT FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): I rise today with a much heavier heart than I had originally intended, but with a great deal of pride nonetheless, pride, that is, in the outstanding performance of our beloved Hamilton Tiger-Cats in the 1998 Grey Cup game played yesterday in balmy Winnipeg.

In another one of a long line of nail-biting "in search of the coveted silver bowl" classics, the Tabbies, on a heart-breaking last-play field goal, fell by a whisker to the Cow-boys from Calgary 26 to 24. But this last-second letdown can in no way, shape or form detract from the on- and off-field performance of this legendary football team in 1998. You see, the Black and Yellow made the greatest one-year turnaround in Canadian football history in 1998, going from 2 and 16 in 1997 to 12, 5 and 1 in 1998.

The resurgence and resilience of this classy band of Bengals is typical of the spirit of Steeltown itself. You can knock us down all you want but we will get back up every time. Just ask the Toronto Argonauts, who have been our playful whipping boys for years.

This amazing comeback story is due in no small part to the commitment and dedication of owners George Grant and David MacDonald. They believed in Hamilton and the Tiger-Cats and the populace responded. We can look forward to an even bigger and better year in 1999. I'm certain we'll be sipping from Earl Grey's magical bowl one year from now.

Congratulations to coach Ron Lancaster and his staff, all the players, equipment people, office staff and, most of all, the fans. Make no mistake, the Cats are back. On behalf of all —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Point of order, Mr Speaker: We all appreciated the statement from the member for Hamilton Mountain, but it's the Calgary Stampeters, not the Cowboys.

MEMBERS' INTEGRITY

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): What was it? Was it a private trip? Was it a business trip? The people of Ontario want to know and they have a right to know. Was taxpayers' money used for the Premier's recent trip to New York?

With questions being raised over the nature of the Premier's recent junket to New York City and to the Grey Cup game yesterday, you would think the Premier would want to listen to what the people of Ontario want and provide them with ongoing accountability.

I have repeatedly asked the Harris government to call my private member's bill entitled the Ministerial Travel Accountability Act for second and third readings so that the people of Ontario will know without a doubt that their tax dollars are not being used by the Premier and being abused by his cabinet.

We all know the stink that was raised earlier this year when the leader of the NDP Howard Hampton's private member's expenses were made public. Why, then, won't the Premier and the cabinet consent to the same kind of scrutiny? Why won't the Premier and his cabinet agree to unanimous consent to have this bill debated immediately?

Later this afternoon, after statements by ministers, I will be asking for unanimous consent to have this bill debated in the House. Will the Premier have the courage and the integrity to agree and call my bill? Will his cabinet and caucus support my request so that the tarnished image of the Tories in power will start to subside in the minds of the people of Ontario? Will he have the courage and the integrity to be accountable?

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I am grateful for the opportunity today to be able to speak on a very important issue facing residents of Ottawa-Carleton, and that is the state of their ambulance system in Ottawa-Carleton.

As you know, ambulance services are part of the downloading package that this government has passed on to the responsibility of municipalities. However, such is the incompetence of this government that not only does the Ministry of Health still run the ambulance services in Ottawa-Carleton while forcing property taxpayers to pay for it, but it runs it so badly that people are suffering, indeed even dying as a result.

Recently, an independent audit of the ambulance services in Ottawa-Carleton run by the Ministry of Health found out the response time failed to meet ministry standards. The legislative standard, according to the Ambulance Act, is nine minutes or less 90% of the time. The independent audit found that the best response times in Ottawa-Carleton were 13½ minutes 90% of the time and the worst half an hour.

As one regional councillor put it, it is faster to order pizza in some parts of Ottawa-Carleton than to get an ambulance. This is absolutely unacceptable. People's lives

are at stake. Will the Minister of Health do her job and take immediate steps to ensure that the legislative standards for ambulance response time are adhered to in Ottawa-Carleton, so that lives are not needlessly lost?

PEARL GOODALL

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise in the House today to speak of a fine lady from my constituency by the name of Pearl Goodall, who recently passed away at the age of 89.

It is most appropriate to speak of Mrs Goodall at this time of year when local Santa Claus parades are being held. In 1979, Mrs Goodall became the founder of the Lakefield Santa Claus parade.

As our local paper, the Examiner, noted, "If an event was intended to help children, and it happened in Lakefield, Pearl Goodall probably had a hand in it." Mrs Goodall was a member of the senior citizens' council, the Orange Lodge and St John the Baptist Anglican Church. She was an active volunteer at the Lakefield Fair for many years. Her good work was recognized in 1992 when she won the 125th Anniversary of Confederation of Canada Award from the Governor General. In 1977, when the Lakefield Chamber of Commerce chose their citizen of the year, the obvious choice was Mrs Goodall.

Mrs Goodall was a person who will be sadly missed by her family and the community of Lakefield, and I thank the Legislature for the opportunity to speak of this indeed fine lady.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I beg leave to represent a report from the standing committee on resources development and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 70, An Act to engage the private sector in improving transportation infrastructure, reducing traffic congestion, creating jobs, and stimulating economic activity through the sale of Highway 407 / *Projet de loi 70, Loi visant à intéresser le secteur privé à améliorer l'infrastructure des transports, réduire la circulation engorgée, créer des emplois et stimuler l'activité économique par la vente de l'autoroute 407.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 2, 1998, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 38, An Act to revise the law relating to condominium corporations, to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act and to make other related amendments / *Projet de loi 38, Loi révisant des lois en ce qui concerne les associations condominales, modifiant la Loi sur le régime de garanties des logements neufs de l'Ontario et apportant d'autres modifications connexes.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Standing order 62(a) provides that "The standing committee on estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 59 and 61 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year."

The House not having received a report from the standing committee on estimates for certain ministries on Thursday, November 19, 1998, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 62(b) the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Management Board Secretariat, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Community and Social Services, and Ministry of Transportation are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAX CREDITS AND REVENUE PROTECTION ACT, 1998 LOI DE 1998 SUR LES CRÉDITS D'IMPÔT ET LA PROTECTION DES RECETTES

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 81, An Act to implement tax credits and revenue protection measures contained in the 1998 budget, to make amendments to other statutes and to enact a new statute / *Projet de loi 81, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre des crédits d'impôt et des mesures de protection des recettes contenus dans le budget de 1998, à modifier d'autres lois et à en édicter une nouvelle.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Ernie Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): With the introduction of this bill, the government is proposing to fulfill and even exceed the commitments made in the budget last May. We have listened to the ideas and recommendations of Ontarians and made changes to improve the many budget initiatives.

If the bill is passed, the total number of tax reductions brought to individuals and businesses in Ontario by the government would be 67 so far. Tax credits in this bill will benefit working families and Ontarians with disabilities. Tax credits will make more capital available to businesses, especially small businesses, in communities throughout Ontario. Special credits will help to create well-paying jobs in the new-economy industries of digital imaging, computer animation and special effects. Tax credits will help the sound recording industry, which is the single biggest promoter of new Canadian musical talent.

Measures in this bill will help parents to get and keep jobs while ensuring their young children are well looked after, both by reimbursing parents for part of their costs and by encouraging construction and renovation of licensed child care spaces.

The legislation is a companion piece to the government's historic Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which is also being introduced today. Our bill provides positive fiscal measures to encourage and facilitate the participation of Ontarians with disabilities in the social and economic life of the province.

On the revenue protection side, this bill contains a number of provisions to improve compliance —

The Speaker: This is supposed to be a brief statement.

Hon Mr Eves: It is a brief statement. I will try to get through it as quickly as possible.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon Mr Eves: Thank you, Mr Speaker — to improve compliance with tax legislation and to motivate individuals and corporations to meet their tax obligations.

The bill also enacts a new act to establish a tax to replace the fees charged by the province on grants of probate or administration of estates. As members are aware, these fees were recently held unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1998 LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Mr Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to strengthen environmental protection and enforcement / *Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à affermir la protection de l'environnement et les mesures d'exécution à cet égard.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Today I am

leased to introduce a new piece of legislation that would lead to more effective enforcement of the laws protecting Ontario's air, water and land. The Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act would clarify the rules, improve the Ministry of the Environment's ability to enforce them and increase the penalties for those who do not follow them.

The intention of these amendments is to be fair to those who comply with the law but tough on those who break it. Make no mistake: Ontario's environmental protection laws are strong, but these amendments will make them stronger, tougher on polluters, easier to enforce and fairer to the taxpayer.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Ms Bassett moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to improve the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities / Projet de loi 83, Loi visant à améliorer le repérage, l'élimination et la prévention des obstacles auxquels font face les personnes handicapées.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.
Minister?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I'll be making a statement in ministers' statements.

TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL ACT, 1998

Mr Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act respecting the Corporation of the Town of Richmond Hill.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on November 23, 24, 25 and 26, 1998, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I am pleased to advise the House that our government has today taken constructive action to address the suffering of all victims of the hepatitis C blood tragedy. At noon today, I announced details of a plan of financial assistance to provide immediate support to Ontarians infected with hepatitis C through the blood system prior to 1986 and after July 1, 1990. Today's announcement means that we are delivering on our Premier's commitment to extend compassionate financial assistance to all victims of hepatitis C.

Our plan will involve an information and outreach campaign starting this afternoon so that we can begin the process of delivering on our promise to help everyone who has contracted hepatitis C through the national blood system.

Our campaign includes a Canada-wide toll-free number, 1-877-222-4977, through which individuals will receive an information package on hepatitis C and an application form to apply for financial assistance. This line will also provide access to public health nurses in the event that a caller requires health information on hepatitis C.

1400

Upon completion of an application and confirmation of eligibility, an individual can expect to receive a cheque for \$10,000. This amount is based on our estimation of Ontario's contribution to the 1986-90 assistance package and a total number of claimants of up to 20,000. Should the number of claimants be lower or should the final level of assistance for the 1986-90 claimants differ, we will review this level of support. Our main objective today, however, is to provide the money and the support to the victims. Today we are delivering on our commitment.

The province of Ontario is committed to helping individuals infected with hepatitis C through the blood system to get on with their lives. We believe that financial assistance is necessary to help these people who, through no fault of their own, now have a debilitating condition that can lead to fatigue, jaundice and even liver cancer and death.

Beyond these physical conditions there is the tragic human toll of hepatitis C. People infected with hepatitis C can find themselves unable to work, pay their bills or even put food on the family table for their families. This is the tragic human consequence of hepatitis C. We believe it is time to turn the page and provide these people with immediate financial support to help them get on with their lives.

Justice Horace Krever reminded us with his commission's final report on the blood system one year ago that governments cannot deal with the future until they deal

with the past. Everyone infected with hepatitis C through the blood system needs our help and support. Ontario is doing its part to give them the support and help that they need. Today we again call on Ottawa to do the right thing and we encourage them to join us.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): The people of Ontario enjoy a high standard of environmental protection with tough laws to back it up. They deserve no less. The Ontario government will accept no less.

Ontario's environmental protection laws are strong, but the compliance and enforcement provisions always need to be updated and strengthened. We need greater ability to effectively deter and punish those who choose to operate outside the law and threaten our air, water and land.

This afternoon I am introducing a piece of legislation that would improve the Ministry of the Environment's ability to enforce the laws safeguarding our air, water and land. I might add that this includes many of the provisions that the member Bud Wildman included in his private member's bill, Bill 24. But it goes above and beyond that as well. This legislation, the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act, will close loopholes that have enabled polluters to continue violating the law and avoid penalties imposed upon them. The intention of this bill is to be fair to those who comply with Ontario's environmental laws and tough on those who break them.

These proposed amendments will level the playing field for the public and businesses who are innocent victims of environmental offenders. In fact, since 1985 convicted polluters have gotten away with \$10 million of unpaid fines. It's all well and good for members of the previous governments to talk about the fines levied when they were in office, but the simple fact is they often weren't collected.

Ten million dollars in uncollected fines: That's an offence against the environment and our justice system. Obviously, more effective mechanisms are needed and it is our intention to deliver by ensuring our environment is protected through the most effective and efficient means possible. This legislation will enable our staff to administer a fair, more consistent and efficient system on behalf of all Ontarians.

These proposed powers will ensure that Ontario's laws are consistent with compliance and enforcement provisions in other jurisdictions across North America. This government wants to ensure our compliance and enforcement powers are among the toughest. The Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act will see to that.

These proposals would allow us to go after those who break environmental laws and punish them. The act would give the courts more authority to impose jail sentences and stiffer fines. Courts would also be able to order convicted polluters to pay restitution for environmental damage. Polluters could also be forced to forfeit property and/or equipment used to commit environmental offences.

Forfeiture could also be required if they don't pay their fines.

The Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act also will allow the ministry to seize licence plates and permits from vehicles used to commit environmental offences. It will allow them to streamline the process by which environmental officers issue compliance orders in the field. It will apply monetary penalties for minor environmental infractions. It will secure areas and facilities to ensure evidence is protected. It will extend provisions for control of illegal dumping and cleanup to people who broker illegal waste disposal. It will use modern investigative aids and techniques; for example, under a court order, an electronic tracking device could be fixed to a truck carrying illegal waste to monitor its location by satellite and computer.

For too long the ministry has been handcuffed in dealing with many of those who flout the laws protecting Ontario's air, water and land. This new act sends polluters a message. The days of conducting operations at the expense of the environment are over. The Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act will take the handcuffs off the ministry and put them back where they belong — on the polluters.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Today is a milestone. It is a milestone because the proposed Ontarians with Disabilities Act is the first of its kind —

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's going to be a milestone, not a milestone.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister.

Hon Ms Bassett: It is a milestone because the proposed Ontarians with Disabilities Act is the first of its kind in Canada. If approved by the Legislature, the act will require every ministry to identify, remove and prevent barriers by systematically reviewing its legislation —

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): It does nothing.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): This is embarrassing.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Walkerville, come to order. Members for Beaches-Woodbine and Riverdale, come to order as well please. Minister.

Hon Ms Bassett: — policies, programs, practices and services; in effect, all government activity.

This mandatory review will be part of the annual business planning process of each ministry. This will, over time, affect the thousands of government activities that directly and indirectly impact persons with disabilities.

Ministries' annual disability access plans would contain (1) a list of government activities that would be reviewed in the planning year; (2) measures to be put in

place to ensure that any new government activities are assessed for their effect on access; (3) steps to be taken in the coming year to remove and prevent barriers; and (4) a report on measures the ministry has already taken.

The proposed act is accompanied by a number of initiatives that I am also pleased to announce today:

(1) The government is establishing a Committee on Employment for Persons with Disabilities. The committee will promote access to employment in the private sector and advise the government on employment access issues. It will be composed of representatives of the disability, business and labour communities.

(2) The government is establishing an information and referral service to provide a point of access for business and for broader public sector service providers who need information and resources to make their services and workplaces more accessible.

(3) My ministry will administer an \$800,000 incentive fund for barrier removal projects which have broad application. Leadership projects will encourage different sectors to work together to establish best practices in priority areas such as employment, access to buildings, transportation and education and training; and community projects will encourage local partnerships that remove barriers and improve access to local business and services.

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Other ministries will also be working to improve access for Ontarians with disabilities. The Ministry of Transportation will enhance its community transportation action program to help communities meet the transportation needs of people with disabilities. The Ministry of Education and Training will enhance its Job Connect program to better help persons with disabilities find and keep jobs. The Ministry of Education and Training will also enhance its literacy and basic skills program for persons who are deaf or persons who have a learning or psychiatric disability. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will consult with organizations representing persons with disabilities, municipalities and the home building and development industries to identify priorities for improving barrier-free design standards in the Ontario building code.

Our commitment to preventing and removing barriers for persons with disabilities is government-wide. Today's announcements follow a province-wide consultation. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all participants. While we heard a range of opinions, the goals of equal opportunity and barrier prevention and removal are clearly shared across the board. Ontarians agree that there is a need —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. It's important to let the minister finish. The responses will follow.

Hon Ms Bassett: Ontarians agree that there is a need for better public understanding and increased awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities. Ontarians agree that government can and must foster information sharing, encourage partnerships, provide incentives for barrier removal and lead by example. This is what the proposed Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the new initiatives do.

I am confident that our proposed act, the measures I have just announced and the important initiatives this government has already put in place will improve access for persons with disabilities. This government believes that all Ontarians, and our province as a whole, stand to gain when every one of us has an equal opportunity to contribute to the social and economic well-being of our province.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): Today I rise to recognize the most important group of people to the future of our great nation and province: our children and youth.

As we all know, November 20 has been designated as National Child Day. As minister responsible for children, I am very happy to take part in this celebration.

This day marks the anniversary of the United Nations' adoption of both the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which took place on November 20, 1959, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was established 30 years later on November 20, 1989.

The convention states its goals clearly: the promotion to the fullest extent of the health, well-being and potential of all children, adolescents and youth.

This is an objective which I share. It is also an objective which our government shares and was tangibly demonstrated when Premier Harris appointed, for the first time in Ontario's history, a minister responsible for children.

Since being given that responsibility, I have toured many regions of the province, visiting a wide range of programs and facilities that assist children in need. I have listened to children, their families and community organizations that serve them. I am proud to say that this government is moving forward to enhance the lives and the futures of children.

This government believes the development of the whole child is vitally important. That is why our government is sponsoring a study into the early years of life, led by world-renowned expert Dr Fraser Mustard and child advocate and former Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Can I ask the members to come to order in the opposition benches. I would like to hear the statement from the minister, and it's not easy to do.

Hon Mrs Marland: That is why our government is sponsoring a study into the early years of life, led by world-renowned expert Dr Fraser Mustard and child advocate and former Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick the Honourable Margaret McCain.

This study will provide the government with options and recommendations on the best ways to prepare all of Ontario's children for success in school, in their careers and in their lives. The early years study will help us decide

what we in Ontario can do to lay the basis for lifelong learning, behaviour and health of our children.

This is just one initiative our government has undertaken for children in Ontario, but it is only one of literally dozens.

For instance, more than 56,000 children across the province have also been helped through nutrition programs in partnership with the Canadian Living Foundation for Families.

We have developed the Learning, Earning and Parenting program to help single parents on welfare finish school and learn important parenting skills.

Through the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children initiative, each year all of Ontario's 150,000 newborns will be screened for risk factors and help will be provided through such services as home visits and case management.

The government has reviewed the child welfare system to see how we can better protect children. In 1997, we increased funding to allow agencies to hire 220 more staff. This year we announced an additional \$170 million over the next three years to further increase staffing, improve training and revitalize foster care.

Our government has also introduced child welfare legislation to ensure that the well-being of children is always of paramount importance.

Students in Ontario will benefit from new province-wide quality standards our government has introduced to improve the education system. We have increased classroom spending by \$583 million, introduced a new, rigorous curriculum, and developed new —

The Speaker: Responses? Minister, come to order.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of the fact that the minister was running on 33 1/3 instead of 78 rpm, it's obvious that she needs more time to finish her statement. In light of the large number of important statements — four statements today, all of import — I would ask for unanimous consent to give the minister time to finish her statement and to increase the time for responses for each of the opposition parties from five to 10 minutes each.

The Speaker: Agreed? I heard a "no."

Responses, official opposition.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I heard a "no."

What are you up for?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I'd like to speak to the —

The Speaker: You want a point of order? Point of order, government House leader.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I'm quite willing to extend the time for response. As you know, during the minister of culture's —

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The Speaker: All right. I want to hear your point of order.

Hon Mr Sterling: We lost about two minutes with regard to that.

The Speaker: I just want to know the point of order.

Hon Mr Sterling: I request unanimous consent to extend both the time for our speeches, the minister's statement, and by the same amount for each of the opposition parties.

The Speaker: However long it takes for the minister to finish, we will calculate that and we'll add that on to the five minutes they usually get.

Interjections.

The Speaker: No, hold it. I'm just getting that straight: to add that on to the five minutes they usually get. Agreed? Agreed. Minister.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order, please. I don't know about you, but I've got places to be tonight. Minister?

Hon Mrs Marland: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. We have increased classroom spending by \$583 million; we've introduced a new, rigorous curriculum; and we've developed new understandable report cards for the province.

We have also introduced a new early learning grant to ensure that young children benefit from either a junior kindergarten program or other early learning programs that best meet the needs of students in their local communities.

Three hundred fifty thousand children from low- and middle-income families will be helped through the Ontario child care supplement for working families. Moreover, since 1995 this government has created more than 14,500 child care spaces.

Furthermore, as many as 75,000 children will receive the speech therapy they require before they start school through the preschool speech and language services program.

As well, more than 5,000 at-risk families will receive the supports they need through the Better Beginnings, Better Futures program. This assistance will continue right through the primary school years.

This government has demonstrated its commitment to children time and time again. We have created important new initiatives for children and are putting these plans into action to help our children achieve success in school, work and throughout their lives.

This government will continue to work to improve the well-being of Ontario's most precious people: our children. By focusing on the healthy growth and development of children, we are focusing on the legacy we must leave for them. I hope we can all be a part of building that legacy for all Ontario's children.

The Speaker: For the responses, each party will be given seven minutes and 30 seconds. Responses, official opposition, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to comment briefly on the new Mike Harris billion-dollar tax that he introduced today called the estate administration tax, retroactive, amazingly, to 1950. I would have thought that a new billion-dollar tax by Mike Harris might have been worthy of some ministerial statement, but I think the public will understand a billion-dollar tax retroactive to 1950 is the new Mike Harris.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): We want to congratulate the minister for finally having dropped her opposition and agreed with the Ontario Liberal Party on compensating all hep C victims. But we also want to say that when the minister talks about turning the page, that book isn't closed until a real tracking of all the victims of hep C has been done.

There is no cheap way out of this, Minister. This is not the final word in terms of what victims are looking for. You have to make a commitment to ensure that this is going to allow each victim to be compensated matching the severity of their illness.

Minister, we'll be watching; we'll be making sure.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I read with great interest the useless platitudes in this speech and comments by the Minister of the Environment when he introduced his legislation today.

He may put this feel-good, toughing up of legislation in place. However, what he fails to tell us is that he virtually doesn't have any inspectors left in his ministry to enforce these regulations. Charges have been dropped, every year they have gone down, prosecutions have gone down, fines have gone down and his budget as minister has been cut by 30% or 40%. The reality is that he has brought in all this new, supposedly tough legislation without any staff and without any new regulations in place.

You've put the mechanism in place to try to collect fines but you've totally wiped out the regulations. It's a smokescreen, Minister; it's a joke. We're still waiting for the Drive Clean program; we're still waiting for vehicle emissions testing; we're still waiting for some real action.

What we have today, Minister, is a feel-good, last-ditch attempt to save what little shred of credibility you have left as Minister of the Environment. Frankly, you've failed once again and you've polluted this legislation with your garbage.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I have a response to the statement today by the minister responsible for children. I wish that this minister truly were for children. Instead of giving us fancy titles and fancy programs, we'd like to see you actually in the field working for children.

What we know is that today there are fewer services available for children who need help, via early intervention in the school system and in children's mental health agencies. More kids today need more help and that is help that this government is denying them.

I look forward to Dr Mustard's response, and we ask you, what do you think Dr Mustard will tell you? You're going to ask him about child care. What do you think he's

going to tell you about child care? He is the premier advocate for child care in Ontario so we, of course, look forward to his report. I look at this as simply a delaying tactic for you to actually implement programs that would be helpful to children.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): It's with absolute sorrow that I stand to respond to the cop-out by the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about the minister's announcement. She hasn't provided the opposition with the bill and it's no wonder, because the bill says absolutely nothing. It's an absolute betrayal by this government, by that minister and by that Premier of persons with disabilities in this province.

The minister's statement says that the proposed features of her act will recognize the rights of persons with disabilities to equal treatment without discrimination in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

I should tell the minister that we've had that for 10 years. We have had that. It was a Liberal government that brought that in with Human Rights Code amendments 10 years ago. What we need are mechanisms for enforcement. What we need are mechanisms that can work to ensure that persons with disabilities aren't left out of economic recovery of this province and aren't left out of the life of this province.

Minister, you've abandoned the disabled community just as you did this summer when you didn't listen to them, when you didn't give them access to your public hearings.

Then the minister goes on to say that they're going to improve access to persons with disabilities through the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their participation in the social and economic life of the province.

Minister, those barriers are well-identified. They are identified at the municipal level, they are identified at the provincial level, they are identified in the private sector, they are identified in the broader public sector. They have been identified for a number of years.

What you've done is simply given a little bit of Pabulum, a few good words that mean absolutely nothing because you have not used the resources or strength of your ministry or government to help move forward the plight of people with disabilities in this province.

Then the minister goes on to say they are going to require every minister to prepare an annual disability access plan as part of the ministry's annual planning process, setting out its measures for improving accessibility.

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Those were done years ago. What your government hasn't done is move the process forward. Every ministry of your government has those plans. This Legislature has those plans. This is a sorry, sorry day, where the minister has abandoned the members of her own caucus who

supported a resolution in this House that would afford the disabled a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

What does that mean for people in this province? It means we don't have the same protections they have in Alabama. It means we don't have the same protections they have throughout the United States. It means this government is not prepared to do what their right-wing counterparts in the United States did a decade ago. It means that minister has no credibility on these issues. She did not listen to the disabled community. They're talking about voluntary compliance. When my resolution was passed, we discovered the Premier's office in North Bay wasn't accessible to the disabled. They had a ramp that they weren't willing to put out. That's what voluntary compliance is.

This government, that Premier and that minister have effectively abandoned the disabled community and have left it to the next government to bring in a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act. All the advertisements in the world aren't going to make up for the fact that that Premier and that minister have abandoned the disabled and misled this province in terms of the traditions we ought to be upholding. You should be ashamed.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You have to withdraw that.

Mr Duncan: I withdraw the statement "misled."

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'd like to respond briefly to the statement by the Minister of Health. I think all of us are pleased that this government has finally moved and wish that the federal government, the federal Liberals, would move on real compensation for victims of hepatitis C.

But I must tell the minister how concerned I am about the form in which this announcement has been made. Quite frankly, what I see here is an effort to try to claim you're fulfilling your promises without in fact fulfilling the expectations of those who contracted hepatitis C in this province at all.

First of all, you have limited this compensation to \$10,000; you have limited it to that and up to 20,000 claimants. That's \$200 million, and it sounds like a lot, except that we know, those of us who went through estimates with your ministry, how proud you were to trumpet the fact that you had set aside \$300 million to compensate hepatitis C victims. We wonder what happened to the \$100 million, and we wonder what happens if more than 20,000 claimants come forward with concerns.

We also notice that missing from this is a guarantee that this \$10,000 will not count towards social assistance. When we compensated those who had contracted HIV from the blood system, we were very clear that any compensation would not count towards the deductible for social assistance. There is no such guarantee in your statement. There was no such guarantee at the press conference this afternoon. Minister, I am surprised that you

sound so proud of this announcement when that explicit commitment has not been made in this place.

A final word to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation: I hope you are thoroughly ashamed of this so-called Ontarians with Disabilities Act. As the parent of a disabled child and on behalf of all the disabled people in this province, this is a disgrace. Frankly, Minister, I can't imagine you being part of this boondoggle.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'd like to reply briefly to the Minister of the Environment's statement. I appreciate his comments regarding my bill. He will know, as House leader, that Bill 24, a bill to crack down on the quick-buck artists who dump illegally across this province and pollute the province as a result, passed second reading unanimously in this House in May 1996, and it was referred to the resources committee and it has languished there since. The bill was reintroduced in May 1998 as Bill 13, and the government has just now moved with its own bill. We obviously haven't had time to analyze the bill, but I would say my colleague the member for Riverdale welcomes the improved enforcement that he promises.

I would just say this one thing in closing: that it is impossible for the minister to enforce this when his ministry enforcement branch has been gutted and his budget has been gutted. If you don't have the inspectors, you're not going to be able to make strong enforcement regulations carried out.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): First of all, to the minister responsible for children's issues, I can't count the number of times I've stood here and asked you to stand up for children in this province, and I didn't see today any results from that. Let me tell you why.

Very clearly, if we look at the children most at risk, those in poverty, your government took 22% of income from those kids, and you also have clawed back the national child benefit from the poorest children in this province. When you talk about child care, I'm shocked at your statement that you've created more than 14,000 spaces. That is an outright, bold-faced inaccuracy. You have not created one space. There may be some more private sector licences out there. You've not created one space or added one dollar to subsidies. In fact, you cancelled subsidies under Jobs Ontario programs that were there. You took away capital funding for child care from budgets from the community and social services ministry. You cancelled the capital program for child care centres in schools. The mental health system that we've talked about so often for children — where's the legislation to mandate those services that your Premier promised me we could work on together? Where is the lifting of the freeze for funding for children's rehabilitation and treatment centres?

Minister, we look forward to Fraser Mustard's report. We know what he's going to say. The question is, will our government listen?

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): May I say to the minister responsible for citizenship, the acts you introduced today — and I want to tell persons interested in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, this is two pages. The first page is a preamble. The only thing in this is a guarantee that ministries will have to do a systemic barrier review as part of their annual business plan. That is it.

For five years under our government every ministry had to do that. You cancelled that when you came into power. You fired the staff who were responsible for doing those reviews. You took away the dollars responsible for implementing the accommodation measures. You cancelled all of that. Now you're putting it in legislation. This is a betrayal of a million and a half persons with disabilities. All this act does is say, "Government, get your act together and show leadership." You should have been doing that already. What are you going to do for the private sector out there? You're going to put together a joint committee. What are you going to do for the broader public sector, municipalities? You're going to put together an information and referral service.

Committees, information, referral: This is a cruel hoax. This doesn't come close to meeting one of the demands of persons with disabilities who participated in your hoax of a consultation this past summer. You heard from people right across this province who demanded and fought their way into your hearings when you at first wouldn't let them in. You heard what they wanted. You heard the principles that had to be contained in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act to really provide access.

Minister, this will not cut it. You will hear, blazing across this province, a response from persons with disabilities. An anger and a fire will be set that you will not be able to put out unless you scrap this act, unless you bring forward a real Ontarians with Disabilities Act that meets the needs to ensure that there is barrier-free access to all goods, services, programs, facilities, businesses.

This province can be a place for all people to participate in. If you had the will and the guts to stand up to what you promised in the Common Sense Revolution, it would be. We would be on our way to that in the legislation that we'll be debating in this House. I can tell you, Minister, this will not cut it. You will not be able to perpetrate this hoax, this sham, this charade on persons with disabilities in this province. They will not stand for it.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As I said earlier in my statement, I would be asking the House for unanimous consent to have second and third reading of Bill 64, An Act respecting Accountability for Ministerial Travel. There are 19 cabinet ministers in the House today —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You can ask for that. You're seeking unanimous consent. Agreed? No.

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MEMBERS' INTEGRITY

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, I have today laid upon the table a request by the member for Rainy River to the Honourable Robert C. Rutherford, Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion on whether the member for Nipissing and the member for Willowdale have contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I wish to welcome the 17th group of pages to serve in this 36th Parliament:

Phillip-Lee Barthelmes-Franchetto from Simcoe Centre; Kristin Burns, London Centre; Julia Chapman, Willowdale; Ryan Cookson, Riverdale; Morgan Fuller, Wellington; Amanda Galloway, Waterloo North; Brendan Greenslade, Kenora; Michael Kitchen, Kitchener; Shannon Lees, Muskoka-Georgian Bay; Matthew MacDonald, Oakville South; Mariko Mackasey, York East; Lynn Mastrocola, Mississauga West; Arvin Mohindra, Durham West; Jeremy Nelson, Mississauga South; Emilio Paesano, Etobicoke West; David Parker, SDG & East Grenville; Maggie Pearson, Peterborough; Chiara Van Hooren, Windsor-Riverside; Joshua Wales, Victoria-Haliburton; and Emily Wilson, Niagara South. Welcome. I hope you enjoy your stay.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Deputy Premier. You will know that there was unanimous and universal condemnation of your use of taxpayer dollars to fund Mike Harris's re-election campaign. We've raised that issue time and time again in this Legislature. Notwithstanding that condemnation, let's take a look at what's happened during the past two weeks.

There have been two new ads airing on Ontario TV, one for education, one for health care. They total \$4 million. Last week there was another pamphlet sent to Ontario households. Today, apparently not being satisfied with the media's interpretation of what you're doing, you put out your own paper. These two publications here cost \$1 million. During the last two weeks you've spent another \$5 million.

Have you no shame, Minister? Do you not get it? The public does not support this kind of expenditure.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I'm sure the Chair of Management Board would be delighted to answer this question.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): As the Leader of the Opposition knows, the government has an obligation to inform the public of what's taking place in this province. There's been a lot of change in the last number of years to make up for the lack of any progress in the preceding 10 years before our government was elected.

If you compare our advertising budget to your advertising budget, all governments spend money on it. If you're talking specifically about today's supplement in the national edition of the *Globe and Mail*, that's intended to draw attention to Ontario's attractive investment climate and try to encourage and attract other jobs to this province. Ontario is leading the nation in job growth; 440,000 net new jobs have been created since mid-1995. That's positive news and it's a positive message that we want to spread right across Canada and around the world.

Mr McGuinty: This is an obscene expenditure of taxpayer dollars. Everybody knows that you can stand up in this Legislature and try to couch it in whatever kind of language you want, but the public understands what's going on.

To date, you are spending \$47 million in taxpayer dollars to put forward your message, designed specifically to have Mike Harris re-elected as Premier of Ontario. That's all it's all about. It's very, very clear.

Maybe you can tell us, Minister; please stand up: How much more money do you intend to spend between now and the time of the beginning of the election? How many more taxpayer dollars are you going to be spending in addition to the \$47 million you've already spent in an effort to have Mike Harris re-elected as Premier?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The Leader of the Opposition knows that when his party was in government in 1990-91, you spent \$50 million and there wasn't even a lot of change going on. In fact, some people said it was because of your lack of meeting the challenges that government should have been facing in order to have change take place over a longer period of time and more gradually that our government has had to take on some tough decisions around policy that your two governments ducked in the areas of education and health care.

In terms of advertising, you mentioned a number. There's a lot of change going on. The public have asked us to keep them informed. That's what we're doing.

Mr McGuinty: Let's just take a look at your priorities. We have the highest tuition fees in the country. We have the fewest nurses per capita in the country. We have 500,000 children growing up here in Ontario in poverty. Notwithstanding those very real and pressing challenges, what do you do? You find 47 million taxpayer dollars to invest in an effort to have Mike Harris re-elected as Premier.

Why don't you stand up, be honest, stop spending this money on an effort to re-elect Mike Harris as Premier, and call the election? Do what's right: Stop spending taxpayer dollars in this effort. Call the election. If you want to have an election, let's have an election.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I think everyone's aware that the Liberals have had a long tradition of calling elections after three years, but I just need to remind the Leader of the Opposition that when you did that last time you were at 55% in the polls; today you might be at 49%, but it's only in Toronto. So I ask him to show a little patience. We have to communicate. I realize he's worried about his support. We would encourage him to communicate what the Liberal policies will be as well.

In terms of the government's advertising, we have a responsibility to inform the taxpayers of the changes that are taking place.

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ANTI-TOBACCO LEGISLATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Health. Smoking is the number one cause of preventable illness and death in Ontario. Every year 12,000 Ontario adults die from smoking-related illness, and every month 3,000 Ontario children take up the habit. What's more worrisome is the fact that Ontario's children are taking up that habit at an ever-faster rate.

Apparently there's all kinds of money, in fact \$47 million worth, to advance Mike Harris's re-election campaign. My question to you is very simple: When was the last time you ran an ad on Ontario TV letting Ontario's children know about the dangers of smoking?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): The Leader of the Opposition knows that we have in this province a very comprehensive tobacco prevention strategy. We are very concerned about the number of young people who continue to smoke. I am very pleased to say that we have been a leader in Canada in enforcing tobacco control legislation. We have laid over 2,800 charges and we have issued an additional 2,700 tickets for offences under the provincial Tobacco Control Act.

We continue to do everything we can. In fact, our \$17 million heart health campaign that we launched earlier this year is also committed to identifying tobacco-related health issues. We have a comprehensive strategy, we continue to move forward, and I am very proud of the initiatives that we have undertaken thus far. We will continue to do more.

Mr McGuinty: We'll just see how tough the minister is prepared to get when it comes to smoking and children in Ontario. BC has introduced legislation and has launched a suit against tobacco companies. You will be aware that several US states have recently achieved a settlement in the amount of approximately \$200 billion — that's "b," billion dollars.

Minister, are you prepared to join the BC suit? Are you prepared to stand up for Ontario children who, notwithstanding all of your programs that you just talked about, are taking up smoking at a rate faster than they have during the past 10 years in Ontario? Are you prepared to join the BC suit?

Hon Mrs Witmer: First, let me say that unfortunately the BC suit will not do anything to reduce smoking among people in Ontario. However, it is certainly an issue we are actively taking a look at.

What we are going to do, beginning in January 1999, is review our total Ontario tobacco strategy in order that we can consult with all the researchers and the leaders in the health community to best determine how we can eliminate young people from ever starting smoking and how we can ensure that those who have started will stop.

But I can tell you, following the lead of BC will not do anything to eliminate these people in this province who have started to smoke. That is but one component of any strategy.

Mr McGuinty: It's most telling that the minister didn't hesitate, together with her caucus colleagues, to join the Alberta suit when that province decided it was going to fight against the implementation of gun control. She has done this notwithstanding the express wishes to the contrary of Ontario police. She's acting against gun control, for the gun lobby.

Now I am asking her to act against the tobacco lobby for Ontario children in the same way that several American states have and in the same way that BC is doing at present. The Yanks have stood up for their kids, BC is standing up for their children. I'm asking this minister, is she prepared to stand up for Ontario children and join a lawsuit and get whatever we can from those tobacco companies, but especially to ensure that we can put in place much more effective prevention programs, because those in existence at present obviously aren't working.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Maybe the member didn't hear what I said, but I indicated that beginning in January 1999 we were going to totally review our tobacco strategy in order to ensure that young people not embark on smoking or to encourage them to quit.

As far as standing up for people in this province is concerned, I am proud to say that today this government stood up for the victims of hepatitis C.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Education about the government's school closures policy. Earlier this month the Premier tried to buy you some time on school closures until after the next election. You've changed the school funding formula so that you won't force schools to close until after the election, but the problem is that your funding formula was wrong then, it's still wrong, and tinkering with it won't change it.

It's still the case, isn't it, that if you determine, according to your funding formula, that a school has excess capacity, meaning it's not 100% full, the school board in question will have to close schools before they get any money for new schools? That's still the case, isn't it?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I'm glad the member raised the funding

formula, because there's a good deal of excellent news which has been recognized by boards across Ontario.

The chair of the Toronto board, for example, says, "It appears that this is somewhat of a good-news story." Perhaps the leader of the third party doesn't consider it to be a good-news story, but the chair of the Toronto board considers it to be a good-news story.

The North Bay Nugget: "It is very good news for the Near North," says the chair of the Near North District School Board.

In Oshawa, trustee Susan Shetler has indicated that this is wonderful news that indicates the ministry is listening, and on and on it goes.

The new formula, as amended, will allow for schools with 20% below their capacity to receive operating funding as if they were at full capacity.

Mr Hampton: The question was about what happens to those boards that have a school that isn't 100% full according to your funding formula and yet elsewhere within their district they have an overcrowded situation or they need to build new schools and the funding formula is still the same. Those boards of education, according to your funding formula, and I give you Kitchener as an example, will have to close downtown schools before they get any money for schools that need to be built in the suburbs. That is still the situation, and that's why you refuse to answer the question.

Minister, you're not manufacturing widgets, you're supposed to be providing an education for our children, and there are still big problems with your funding formula. Will you commit to a review of the funding formula so that boards of education won't be forced to close downtown schools, needed community schools, in order to meet the needs of their suburbs? Will you do that, finally?

Hon David Johnson: I am proud of the funding formula, in the sense that for the first time ever in the history of Ontario money is allocated on a fair and equal basis to every student across the province. The school boards now are starting to recognize the fairness of the funding formula, indicating that this is a good-news story. For the first time, whether a child is in an urban area, a rural area, an assessment-poor area or an assessment-rich area, the funds are allocated on a fair, equal basis, so that each and every child in Ontario will get the same opportunity for school resources, for books, for teachers within the classroom; the same opportunity for a decent school, for facilities, for transportation; equal opportunity across the province. I might add that the focus is on quality.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Final supplementary.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I represent an area where the problems with your funding formula are clear. We're still waiting for the good news. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board is a huge mix of urban, suburban and rural communities. The rural and suburban communities desperately need new schools. Forty per cent of rural and suburban students are in portables. This means that schools in the city of Ottawa, a community I

represent, are still under the threat of closure if they're not operating at 100%.

Minister, why are you trying to solve the accommodation crisis in the rural and suburban communities by depriving the children in the city of Ottawa of their community schools. Why, Minister?

Hon Mr Johnson: First of all, let me congratulate the member for being now a member of the NDP caucus. I noticed there didn't seem to be too many claps from the Liberal backbenches.

In all of the rhubarb associated with the member's first question from the NDP ranks, I didn't hear all of his question, but I will say again that the funding formula directs the resources to where they are needed, directs the funding to the school boards which have the greatest need for new and permanent school space for their students, those school boards that have the greatest need, those students that have the greatest need. Within the school boards and within the schools it directs the resources to the classroom, to the teachers, to the school boards, to the other resources that go within the classroom, to the boards that need the money, to the schools that need the money.

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SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Minister of Education again: The minister says that the objective of the funding formula is to get the money to the schools that need it and to the students who need it. No, Minister, the objective of your funding formula is to get the money out of the schools. People understand that. That was the whole idea behind school closures and it's the whole problem also with special education.

Minister, you know you've created a huge problem in the funding of special education. You know that the students who need individual support aren't getting it. In fact, you've had to set up an expert panel to review the criteria for individual funding of special education students. Can you tell us, has the expert panel you created reported and what are its recommendations with respect to special education?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The ministry has undertaken a number of initiatives with regard to special education. Number one, we have set aside over a billion dollars — it turns out it'll be about \$1.2 billion in special education — and protected that money for the first time ever so that those monies must be spent on special education and nothing else in Ontario.

The expert panel is undertaking a review for the ministry. I have not received their recommendations, but I expect them in the near future. In addition to that, there have been a number of experts reviewing the submissions of the various boards for their intensive support amounts, particularly in level 2 and level 3, across Ontario. Those experts, former superintendents or current superintendents, experts in education, have been giving the ministry good

advice which we have heeded in terms of increasing the funding —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): First supplementary.

Mr Hampton: The experts told you your funding formula was wrong in terms of attempting to force schools to close. The experts are also telling you that your special education formula is wrong. You must know about the case of Harry Bellemare. This case was in the newspaper. He's 11 years old, he has cerebral palsy, he uses an electric wheelchair, and he has lost the full-time special education help he used to have because of your funding formula.

Then there's Andrew MacPherson, who used to get help at school. He's 10 years old, in grade 5. Under your new funding formula he's been denied any help this year. Your funding formula says he doesn't qualify for extra help that he needs to go to the washroom or to take his medication. His mother has —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Education.

Mr Hampton: Minister, what are you going to do about these students?

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon David Johnson: I know the leader of the third party is alluding to a case that is in the newspapers today. I can't be specific about the particular case other than the ministry has indicated to me that the parents, last week actually, well before the article appeared in the newspaper, did sit down with the local school board, the Limestone school board in this case, and sorted out that situation, I'm told, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

In terms of other situations, the Toronto school board, for example, on page 6 of its own brochure indicates that it needs \$211 million. Guess what? With the assistance of the experts, we have provided \$211.8 million.

Mr Hampton: This is a minister who always wants to talk about money but never wants to get down to addressing the real issues of the children in need. The problem is your individual support amount or ISA, as it's called, is set up to almost force children to be dependent on adult help. It doesn't allow boards to pool educational assistants.

We've heard from parents like Maureen Vance from Oakville. She found out that her daughter, who started kindergarten this fall, would not be getting an instructional assistant because of your funding changes. She says, "I would like to know how my daughter is supposed to reach her full potential when there aren't enough resources to have someone to take her to the bathroom, let alone help her with her classroom work?"

Minister, you finally listened on the funding formula when it came to closing schools. Will you listen now —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Education.

Hon David Johnson: I'm glad there is an acknowledgement that in regard to the closing of schools issue that

the boards initiated, the ministry has resolved that matter for them.

In terms of the intensive support amount, I will say to the leader opposite that this is something of deep concern for the Ministry of Education because we want to ensure that each and every student who has received and deserves to get attention within our classrooms across the province in fact gets those services. We set up a panel of 11 experts, 11 superintendents and former superintendents across the province, and they came back to us with recommendations as to what was required to support those students across the province.

I might also say that some boards have made their submissions to the ministry in terms of pooling resources, and on their behalf, I would support that sort of approach.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Minister of Citizenship and Culture. In your announcement today about your non-Ontarians with Disabilities Act, you've acknowledged improving access to persons with disabilities through the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their participation in the social and economic life of the province. Given your implicit and explicit acknowledgement of those problems, can you tell me how your so-called Ontarians with Disabilities Act will do that in light of the fact that you've addressed neither questions of enforcement nor enforcement of penalties? Can you tell the House and the province —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Minister.

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I would like to say that the proposed ODA, if you could read what it said, would mandate that all government ministries systematically review all their legislation, all their programs, all their policies and all their services with an eye to accessibility. That means that thousands of government activities that directly and indirectly affect people with disabilities across the province will be reviewed and will be improved. That I might say is far more than you did when you were in government and had five years to do it.

Mr Duncan: I'm sure the minister would like to clarify the absolute inaccuracy. You forgot to mention that you cut the funding for those very things that went on before. You forgot to mention anything about that.

There is no provision for enforcement. There is no provision for penalties for lack of compliance. There is nothing in this so-called legislation that's meaningful. What do you say to persons with disabilities whom you've abandoned yet again? Another government that's abandoned them. What do you say to them today? They're going to be here tomorrow to speak to you and they're going to want to know why, having fought themselves into your closed hearings this summer, having been ignored by you and your government, they have now been given a patronizing bit of pabulum that has no enforcement mech-

anisms, no penalties. What are you going to say to them tomorrow? Having ignored them up to now, how are you going to convince them that there is any kind of enforcement or penalties for non-compliance with an act that really doesn't work? What are you going to say to them tomorrow?

Hon Ms Bassett: I would say there are enforcement measures in place. What you are arguing is the fact that you want a new enforcement agency other than the Ontario Human Rights Code which is in place. This government has maintained funding to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Under the thrust of this government, we have ensured that it is now hearing its cases and streamlining its complaints process. In fact, 80% of new cases sent to mediation are resolved in 90 days, and the commission's new case management system is considered a model process by other agencies that need efficient systems. This government is not going to create an expensive new agency when we have a perfectly good one working right now.

1510

POLICE STRIP SEARCHES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Solicitor General. Over the last few weeks, a number of questions have been raised and there have been a series of highly publicized cases dealing with strip searches by the Toronto police force.

We know that strip searches may be necessary in some circumstances, but a number of very serious questions have arisen out of some of these searches and there are some real questions about visible minorities being singled out. For example, imagine if you were pulled over for a speeding ticket and then subjected to a strip search because of how you looked.

Minister, you have some responsibility here. You can pass regulations. When are you going to take on your responsibility and make sure this situation gets straightened out?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Many police services across the province do have very strict policies in regard to strip searches of suspects. I think we've seen, in respect to the recent incidents that received a significant amount of publicity, that the Toronto Police Services Board has instituted a new policy to deal with it. So I think the tools are there to deal with this policy approach to dealing with suspects in a very different and effective way. It's really in the hands of the board, and I would suggest that the member speak to the Toronto board with respect to that specific concern.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): That's a complete abdication of your responsibility. It's imperative that there be one standard across the province. You have a responsibility to act on this matter. I've got right here a letter that was sent to you by the Canadian Civil Liberties

Association. They point out that you have a crucial role to play in this current and ongoing controversy. They've even provided you with a very basic and practical suggestion, and that is that there have to be common standards across the province. It can't just be up to municipalities.

The public and the police call upon you to be protected by the implementation of a universal standard across the province. It's imperative that you put into place a regulation that sets out exactly when the police should and should not carry out a strip search. It's in your court very much, Minister. Why won't you show some leadership and implement a regulation that's uniform across Ontario?

Hon Mr Runciman: I meet on a rather frequent basis with the chiefs of police from across the province, the police services boards, the police associations and many public groups that have an interest in policing. If we reach a determination that a standard is appropriate in this situation, we'd be quite prepared to move in that regard. Up to this point that case has not been made, but it's certainly not outside the realm of possibility.

TELEMARKETING PRACTICES

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. A number of constituents high atop majestic Hamilton Mountain are telling me they are receiving calls from telephone solicitors who seem to be working from outside Ontario. I know you've cracked down on telemarketing fraud and loan brokers operating in Ontario, but what are you doing to protect consumers from scams that originate from outside Ontario?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Ontario has been a leader in fighting against scams and various frauds. For this I believe a lot of credit should go to Staff Sergeant Barry Elliott of the OPP, who is heading up a force called Phonebusters. Since we've initiated and worked with Barry Elliott and Phonebusters, we've had a reduction of around 46% in fraud in the province since 1995.

We've learned that much of this has emanated from outside the province. As a result of that, we've taken the lead again and initiated a program called Canshare. Canshare is a program that shares information between various provinces. For example, if someone is scamming people in Ontario, we will share that information through this Canshare scheme with other provinces, thereby preventing the scam artist from going to, say, Alberta or BC and starting up the same type of scam there.

We really believe this type of program, this sharing of information, will help prevent a lot of fraud and a lot of these people from getting started.

Mr Pettit: I can see how it would be very helpful for law enforcement agencies to have advance knowledge of any criminal activity coming into their area. However, my concern is about the public. What about the people of, say, Hamilton Mountain? Will they be warned about any new scams in their community?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I think warning the public in advance is an extremely important part of preventing fraud. We initiate many news releases and alerts to the public, and as a matter of courtesy many of the local newspapers carry these consumer alerts.

I'd also like to acknowledge that the MPPs have a very keen role to play in all this. I've talked recently with the member for Lambton, who advised me that they had a seniors' antifraud seminar that went on in his area and they had the OPP speaking to seniors. He alerted me as well to a recent scam. This is one where citizens will get a card that looks like it has been sent by Canada Post, by registered mail, and it indicates "Final notice to call" at the top. When they call, they find themselves talking to someone who tells them they've won a set of knives or a trip, but in order for them to collect this prize they have to see a salesman. The salesman turns out to be a vacuum salesman. So this is nothing but a scam.

It's through these types of initiatives advising the public of these types of scams that we can prevent scams, particularly against seniors.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Today we'll be debating the seventh property tax bill, and that bill still doesn't get it right. You have created chaos throughout this province.

Let's just hear what some of the mayors around the province have to say. The mayor of Niagara Falls says that if the government wants to help small business, this is not the way to go. "You've created a mess."

In Sudbury: "This is the final straw. It blows the provincial government's credibility right out of the water."

Phil Leonard, chair of the Frontenac management board, says, "Why does the province not exempt those municipalities that did use the earlier legislation?"

Hazel McCallion in Mississauga is threatening to withhold \$94 million in education taxes from you. She says: "We should send up a white flag. The province really has got us into a mess."

Why didn't you listen to the clerks and treasurers last February when they said, "Whatever you're going to do, wait until 1999 to implement it"? Why are you attacking the property taxpayers —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): We are not attacking property taxpayers. If the honourable member wants to vote against an amendment that limits the amount of business tax increases in every community across the province, I welcome him to stand up and vote against it. You want increases?

While the honourable member's government was in power, if he wants to talk about tax increases, I can tell you what they were in every single municipality in those five years. Gerry Phillips is nodding his head over there, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, if he'd like to

stand up and tell the Legislature and the people of Ontario why he voted for these huge tax increases.

We are limiting tax increases and we're taking the bull by the horns. We are solving an unfair tax system in the province of Ontario, which he didn't have the intestinal fortitude to do.

1520

Mr Gerretsen: You have created chaos and a mess throughout this entire province. Even some of the municipalities, like Halton, that used your tools, as did other areas of this province, must now go back to the drawing board and recreate tax bills, which is an administrative nightmare and an additional cost. The four chambers of commerce support what they did in Halton, as did the four MPPs from that area.

When will you admit that you have made a mistake with all these property tax bills? When are you going to stop doing what you're doing and create reasonable, sensible government for this province rather than your constant attacks on the taxpayers of this province and the municipalities?

Hon Mr Eves: Talking about constant attacks on the taxpayers of the province, this is the first government that has come along and done something about the unfair, inequitable property taxation system in Ontario. At the same time, we have provided municipalities, yet again, from November 1997 to December 31, 1998, some 13 months, the opportunity to adapt to tools to change the system. If that doesn't work, we have limited tax increases to businesses across the province. If he and his colleagues want to vote against that, they're more than welcome to stand up.

They may well want to, seeing as how when they were in government, municipal tax increases in the city of Toronto went up 30%; in Hamilton they went up 42%. You can take any one you want. In York region they went up 36.5%; in Brant they went up 27.2%; in Haliburton they went up 73.6%; and in Kingston, where he was the mayor, they went up 50%.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. In 1990, as Chair of Management Board, I instituted a program of systemic barrier reviews, ministry by ministry. Ministries had to compile the reviews, include it as part of their annual business plan and submit it to Management Board and treasury board during their estimates. Management Board analysts reviewed those plans and provided independent comments to treasury board and Management Board as they reviewed them. There were resources allocated for the systemic barrier reviews. There was a fund to accommodate changes within the ministries. Essentially, everything that you have announced today, which your minister and your government cancelled in 1995, was being done for five years.

What isn't in your legislation is any requirement for municipalities, the broader public sector or the private sector to do a single thing to remove barriers. Surely in the consultation you heard from members of the disability community that they wanted legislative guarantees that the private sector and the broader public sector, as well as the Ontario government, must accommodate and remove barriers. Why is that not included in your legislation?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): First of all, we certainly feel that we listened very intently to 282 groups across the province. We heard what they had to say. We set out the parameters at the beginning that we weren't going to impose mandatory means.

When you ask what we are doing for the business sector, we are having a committee on employment. We listened and heard that they wanted an information and referral service. Business after business told us and me personally that they want to do things about barrier design; they don't know where to go to find out about it. We are bringing that in. We are giving an \$800,000 incentive that will allow small businesses to work on projects that have a broad application, that will remove barriers. We are bringing in, in the education ministry, Job Connect program enhancements that will put people in touch with jobs, people with disabilities who have not been able to do that before. We as a government —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms Lankin: Minister, you didn't listen to people. Don't say you listened intently. You ignored what person after person, group after group representing the community of the disabled came forward and told you.

Goodwill is not enough. Voluntary measures are not enough. This will not improve the situation for persons with disabilities in Ontario. All you've included in this meagre two-page bill is what was already being done in the province under the former government, the plan that you cancelled in 1995, and now in 1998 you're announcing you're going to reinstate it.

This is an abysmal failure. You have failed in your responsibility to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities. How are you going to answer to them?

Hon Ms Bassett: All I can say is that if you feel so strongly, you should have done more. You had five years in government and you did nothing. You would not even support your own member who brought forward a private member's bill, and he himself had a hearing impairment. If you feel so strongly about bringing in endless mandatory means, you had every opportunity to do it. We do have a mandatory measure requiring all government ministries to submit systemic plans.

COURT FACILITIES

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): My question is to the Attorney General. Minister, I know how you feel about the administration of justice at the local level, especially in areas of rural Ontario. I know you agree that because of the previous governments we've had in our

province, all of our infrastructure has deteriorated, certainly our courthouse system. Could you give us an update on the progress your ministry has made in renewing our courthouse facilities in Ontario?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Chatham-Kent for the question. As you are aware, we have embarked on the most extensive courthouse redevelopment scheme in the history of this province. Over the continuing five-year period, we are spending an unprecedented \$250 million to answer the promises that previous governments have made to build courthouses but didn't quite get around to doing.

We're building courthouses in Hamilton, Windsor and Welland, we're building a courthouse in Brampton and in Chatham, and we just opened the courthouse in Cornwall, all of which were courthouses that had been promised by previous governments and not built.

I give you the example of Brampton. This party planned to build the Brampton courthouse. They never got a shovel in the ground. We have kept our promises.

Mr Carroll: Minister, I had the opportunity to have you down to my community to visit what we used as a courthouse, and you agreed with me about the pitiful state it was in. You also know that because of local restructuring in our area, where we reduced from 156 local political positions to 18, we had a building come available, and you in your wisdom saw fit to provide us with the resources for a new courthouse.

We know what happened in the community of Chatham-Kent. Can you give us an update on some other specific areas of the province where you've been able to do some things to upgrade the courthouse facilities?

Hon Mr Harnick: As I was saying, we opened the courthouse in Cornwall on Friday, a promise that was made by the previous two governments. They never got around to building that courthouse. We built the courthouse facility that we opened on Friday at a cost of \$7.5 million. This is one of the most modern, up-to-date courthouses in North America, technologically at the highest level for going into the 21st century. We watched the downtown deteriorate as the two previous parties formed governments. We came along and kept the promise to build the courthouse for the people in Cornwall. We've done the same thing for the people in Windsor. We're doing the same thing of the people in Chatham. We're doing the same thing for the people in Brampton.

We have made promises to upgrade court facilities. We've kept those promises, unlike the previous two governments.

1530

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. Last week your government announced 550 beds for the Hamilton-Wentworth region with regard to long-term care. First of all, this does not even meet the need. There are over 1,000 people on waiting lists. You're going to shut down 180 chronic care

beds in Hamilton-Wentworth. Clearly your announcement falls way short of the need, but beyond that, what is more disturbing is your pattern of awarding long-term contracts to the private sector and to for-profit companies simply to make a buck. In the announcement of the 550 beds, 85% of those beds went to private sector companies and only a small percentage went to LIUNA, local 837.

Clearly, this is the Americanization of health care that you're started on. This is a back-door way of awarding contracts to your friends. Minister, can you tell us why you ignored the non-profit sector with this announcement and gave all the contracts to private sector companies?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I will refer that to the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors): I will advise the member what I told him and his community when I was in Hamilton last week to announce the first long-term-care beds in over a decade in Hamilton. We announced 550 new long-term-care beds in that city, about a 50% increase in the total number of beds, and we still have 758 more beds.

The member gets up in this House and talks about the fact that we're not building them fast enough. It was good enough for you and your government to turn your back for five solid years on the seniors in Hamilton-Wentworth, and this government is putting in those resources, adding to its total allocation of provincial dollars. It's unbelievable, because he campaigned in the last election on the Liberal red book, and the best we were going to get out of the member from Hamilton, Mr Agostino, was that they were going to create a long-term-care coordinating committee to study long-term care. That's all you were going to do. We're building the best.

Mr Agostino: I appreciate the answer, except that I think he's reading from the wrong briefing notes.

Minister, the question refers to the awarding of the contracts. I've told you that the shortfall already doesn't come close to meeting the needs. You ignored and stabbed in the back St Peter's Centre. Your own restructuring commission recommended that St Peter's Centre be used for this type of purpose. It was praised as a leader in caring for seniors. You and your commission and your cabinet stabbed them in the back and betrayed them by not awarding them one single bed. Not one single allocation went to St Peter's Centre. That is a disgrace. It shows the lack of clout that you have in cabinet, that you cannot deliver for Hamilton-Wentworth.

Minister, can you tell again me why you chose to deliberately ignore and knife St Peter's Centre after the restructuring commission told them they should be given some beds?

Hon Mr Jackson: Just for the record, it was the Liberal government under then Minister of Health Elinor Caplan who stabbed St Peter's in the back when it decided there were going to be no more chronic care hospitals in Ontario. It was the Liberal government that decided we were going to phase out chronic care hospitals. The NDP government agreed, and this government is putting together and responding to the Health Services Restruc-

uring Commission's report to extend and build long-term-care beds in this province, an unprecedented 20,000 beds.

If the good citizens of Hamilton-Wentworth haven't any other example of why they should be scared of the Liberal Party as they present themselves to try to be the next government of Ontario —

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Member for Hamilton East, come to order.

Hon Mr Jackson: Dalton McGuinty puts out his stand on health care. I'll tell you what the citizens of Hamilton-Wentworth should be worried about: not one reference in here to seniors, not one reference to long-term care, not one reference to community care. Can the seniors of Ontario, let alone the citizens of Hamilton, really trust the Liberal Party?

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture will know that because of the Asian crisis, the price for wheat, for hogs and for many other commodities has dropped tremendously. In the United States, they're prepared to offer their farmers \$16 billion in help. You know that farmers in Ontario have other challenges as well, because of the drought and because of increased input costs.

Minister, you've cut the ministry's budget; you've offloaded a whole lot of programs on to farmers. What are you prepared to do to help the farmers of Ontario now, in the midst of this crisis?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I'd like to thank my colleague. Yes, I was at the OFA meeting today and I spoke with the farmers of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. We are working with the federal government. We have the safety nets, we have the market revenue and we have the NISA program in place. We are looking very closely at what we can do. I am and will be speaking with the federal minister, the Honourable Lyle Vanclief, later this afternoon. We are working towards some degree of alleviation.

As the member knows, the cycle in agriculture always goes up and down, and we happen to be at the very low ebb of the cycle in grains and hog production. The Asian economic flu has not helped that situation at all. We know about it and we're working on it.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you would know that the national safety nets committee has presented the federal government with a proposal for a national disaster relief program. It will guarantee farmers 70% of their individual farm income average over expenses. You also know that the NISA program won't even come close to helping the average hog farmer in this province, given what has happened, the dramatic decrease in prices and things like the drought.

I hope that you would stand up and say that you are going to fight for the national safety nets committee

proposal. Nothing else will do. It's clear the federal Liberals in Ottawa are dragging their feet on this. What are you prepared to do? What is Ontario prepared to do to fight for Ontario farmers and to make sure they aren't put at risk, given everything that's happening in Asia and given the fact that the federal government is dragging its feet?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We are working very closely with the federal government, with the federal bureaucrats. We are working on a national disaster program. We have some very difficult economic times in certain areas of agriculture, and I will be the first to admit that. We are working on that particular program, and it has to be a two-government initiative.

WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): My question is for the minister with responsibility for women's issues. We all know that we're concerned about the safety of women and children in Ontario. I understand that as part of Wife Assault Prevention Month, the minister made an announcement in Sarnia on the Thursday that just passed. Minister, I was wondering if you could inform the House about this announcement.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I'd like to thank my colleague the member for Huron, southwest Ontario, for the question.

The safety of women and children is a priority during any month of the year for the members of this Legislative Assembly and certainly for the people of Ontario. We have a grant program that was announced last week. In southwest Ontario, there were community-based programs, in partnership with others — Mr Speaker, your area of the province as well — that received over \$57,000. Across the province, we gave out almost \$700,000 to more than 50 community-based agencies in partnership with others to stop the violence.

At the Sexual Assault Survivors' Centre in Sarnia, we met with Pat Brooks, Jean Brady, Diann Gougeon, Val Pitt and Gayle Douglas. They're very eager to get started on a project to put together a booklet on teens and dating, because this is a problematic area at this time in young people's lives. They will also develop a protocol right across their area in partnership with Victims Services of Sarnia-Lambton and the sexual assault treatment centre.

Partnerships work, and they should be very proud of their great accomplishments.

Mrs Johns: I know that you have introduced a number of initiatives within your ministry, Minister, and I was wondering if you would outline some of those initiatives to the House so that we can consider how we might be able to utilize them in our own constituencies.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: There are a number of initiatives. In fact, we had a conference in London, Ontario, on Thursday and Friday, where we were talking about ways we can stop sexual harassment in the workplace, because harassment is the beginning of violence, and it isn't funny, the joke's over, to harass your friends.

With teenagers, it's very important that they have both education and training. One of the resources that we're very proud of is called Peace Breaks. These Peace Breaks are very small vignettes that are used by classes. They were produced in partnership with TVOntario. It's a series of nine three-minute program shorts designed to stand alone or be shown as a series. The Peace Breaks are broadcast on TVO during TVO Kids, a program that many of us know about, and they've been created for youth in elementary schools.

1540

PROBATE AND ESTATE FEES

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question has to do with the new Harris tax that was introduced today that I think will raise about \$1 billion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Who's your question to?

Mr Phillips: It's to the Minister of Finance. It is retroactive, I gather, back 48 years, so it's a new tax introduced today going back 48 years, designed to raise \$1 billion.

My question is this to the minister: I gather from your bill that the Harris government has decided that the fees that were imposed by the previous NDP government on estates are now going to be adopted by Mike Harris and that it is your plan to adapt those fees in the form of a tax, the same fees that were adapted by the NDP government in the form of a tax. Is that your intention, to impose the same fees as the previous government in the form of a tax now and for the future?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): It's the intention of the government to maintain the status quo with respect to fees surrounding probates from 1950 to now. I might point out, if the government were to pay back that money, it would amount to roughly \$1.5 billion in principal, plus interest on that money.

I might also point out to him, by the way, that Management Board of Cabinet's decision to change the fee structure was made in 1988 and 1989 by the David Peterson government. I might also point out to the honourable member for Scarborough-Agincourt that while he was in government and sat in cabinet, his government collected over \$120 million in these fees during that period of time. Surely, if he thought they were illegal or unconstitutional, (a) he wouldn't have taken part in a government that raised the fees in 1988 and 1989, and (b) he wouldn't have collected \$120 million to boot.

PETITIONS

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows — very timely in St Catharines:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology; and

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres; and

"Since the hospital restructuring committee of Niagara used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a cut of \$40 million in funding for Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I've got a petition from approximately 100 people, and there are more coming, that speak against closures of many schools in Toronto, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, are categorically opposed to closure, consolidation of St Raymond Catholic school or any school in the city of Toronto."

I've signed my name to this petition.

PORNOGRAPHY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Whereas children are exposed to pornography in various stores and video retail outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to pornography;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to pornography in retail establishments; prevent minors from entering establishments which rent or sell pornography;

restrict the location of such establishments to non-residential areas."

I agree with this petition and I will be affixing my signature to it.

DENTAL CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a new schedule of dental services for children and people with disabilities was introduced by the government under the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act;

"Whereas the new schedule fails to meet the special needs of children and people with disabilities, reduces services, places barriers to accessing care and creates an environment for various different dental programs across Ontario;

"Whereas the move away from an emphasis on prevention under the new dental schedule brings significant health risks for children and people with disabilities who are often least able to practise good oral hygiene;

"Whereas the new dental schedule interferes with the patients' rights to consent to treatment by requiring administrators, and not patients or substitute decision-makers, to authorize and deny dental treatment;

"Whereas there is no method for the patient to appeal a decision by a plan administrator to deny dental treatment;

"Whereas pre-authorizations, called predeterminations in the new plan, will require that a higher level of confidential patient health information be disclosed to dental plan administrators;

"Whereas the Ontario government has caused confusion among patients by introducing the plan without prior consultation and has not included any affected patient groups in consultations after releasing the new dental plan;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Delay full implementation of the new dental plan until the requirement for predeterminations is removed, patient confidentiality is protected, the plan emphasizes prevention in oral health care, and the government consults directly with affected patients to ensure the new plan will meet the special needs of children and people with disabilities."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 120 people.

"Whereas children are exposed to pornography in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to pornography;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to pornography in retail establishments; prevent minors from entering establishments which rent or sell pornography; restrict the location of such establishments to non-residential areas."

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I present further petitions calling for the elimination of regional government, over 10,000 now. The petition is signed by Mayor Marie Trainer, Mayor Rita Kalmbach, Councillor Gary Nichols and others.

"Whereas the Haldimand-Norfolk region has down-loaded a 17% tax hike on residents, without attempting to cut its own costs; and

"Whereas for the past 25 years, there have been meetings, petitions, referenda and studies calling for a restructuring of regional government; and

"Whereas 80% of the residents did not want regional government in the first place, and in recent referenda 75% of the residents of the city of Nanticoke and 60% of the residents of the town of Simcoe voted against retaining regional government; and

"Whereas residents in the region do not want and clearly cannot afford two levels of municipal government;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that provincial legislation be passed to freeze taxes and eliminate regional government in Haldimand-Norfolk, and institute a form of restructured local government in keeping with the wishes and the financial means of the local residents."

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the hospital restructuring commission established by the Mike Harris government deliberated in secret about the future of hospitals in the Niagara region and has reported in the autumn of this year;

"Whereas the St Catharines General Hospital, the Hotel Dieu Hospital and the Shaver Hospital, along with the Niagara rehabilitation centre, have in the past provided excellent medical care for the people of St Catharines;

"Whereas the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital, the Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie, the Port Colborne hospital and the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby have been key centres of health care in the Niagara Peninsula;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to maintain existing medical services provided at these hospitals, restore the proposed \$43-million cut from operating funds for the Niagara hospitals; and

"That the Ontario Ministry of Health provide additional funding to expand health care services available

in the Niagara region for residents in the Niagara Peninsula."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

1550

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic of illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy other than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I'll sign my name to the petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris has announced its intention of dumping the financing for ambulances, social housing and public health care services on to the backs of municipalities; and

"Whereas this irresponsible action will create a shortfall of more than \$18 million for local governments in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Whereas local representatives in St Catharines and the Niagara region will be forced to either raise property taxes by as much as \$200 per household or cut services, or both; and

"Whereas Mike Harris called municipal representatives 'whiners' when they tried to explain to him that his proposal was unfair and would create gaps in important services such as the delivery of public health care; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing accused local representatives of being opportunistic simply because they attempted to point out that

Mike Harris's proposal was unfair and primarily designed to fund his ill-advised tax scheme; and

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris refuses to listen to the representatives who work most closely with their constituents, that is, the municipal representatives;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Conservative government of Mike Harris to scrap its downloading plan, which will cause either an increase in property taxes or an unacceptable cut to important services, or both."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We've just had I believe the fifth petition made by one member in the House, and at least four or five others who have tried have not had an opportunity to do so. I wonder if you could direct me to where in the standing orders, standing order 38, it suggests that petitions should necessarily be done in party rotation and not on the basis of at least one for every member who wishes to make sure the views of their constituents are heard in this chamber, instead of one member only from a party that can't bring in more than one or two members and can't even maintain any kind of quorum. I think it is terribly unfair to those members who are being deprived. I would ask you to instead reflect on what is in standing order 38, which says nothing about rotation by party.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is a point of order, but this has been a long-established custom in this House, and until it's changed, it will remain.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I have a petition signed by people in my riding to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised in the Common Sense Revolution to maintain health care spending at no less than \$17.4 billion annually; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has exceeded that spending floor every year since being elected; and

"Whereas total health care spending for 1998-99 will be \$18.5 billion, the highest in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has achieved this despite cuts in transfer payments by the federal Liberal government of more than \$2.4 billion; and

"Whereas a recent survey by the Fraser Institute proves that health care waiting lists in Ontario are the shortest anywhere in Canada; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is placing a greater emphasis on community-based health services in order to better care for an aging population; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is eliminating waste and duplication in the health care sector and reinvesting every penny found into quality services; and

"Whereas this has resulted in reinvestments of over \$3 billion; and

"Whereas in Niagara region seniors will benefit from the government's \$54-million investment to create 646 new long-term-care beds in the Niagara region alone; and

"Whereas \$75 million is being invested over the next two years to open hospital beds during peak demand periods in order to handle emergency patients; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has pledged \$24.3 million to dramatically expand breast cancer screening; and

"Whereas 140,000 additional low-income earners are eligible to receive help with their drug costs through the expansion of the Trillium drug plan; and

"Whereas over 520 prescription drugs have been added to the Ontario drug plan formulary, giving seniors and others who rely on the ODB program a wider range of products to serve their health care needs;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed with fulfilling the commitments made in the Common Sense Revolution and continuing to pursue policies which will make Ontario the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family."

I am in full agreement with this petition and will gladly sign it.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Thunder Bay and district are suffering from serious deterioration in our health care system because of the closing of hospital beds before community services and long-term-care facilities are available;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make it an urgent priority to provide more long-term-care services in the home and to provide a sufficient number of long-term-care institutional beds and staff in order to restore the standards of health care to an acceptable level."

As that reflects the reality in my community, I affix my signature to join those of my constituents.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIRNESS FOR PROPERTY TAXPAYERS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LE TRAITEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES CONTRIBUABLES DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend the Assessment Act, Municipal Act, Assessment Review Board Act and Education Act in respect of property taxes / Projet de loi

79, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière, la Loi sur les municipalités, la Loi sur la Commission de révision de l'évaluation foncière et la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne l'impôt foncier.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I indicate at the outset of my remarks that I will be sharing my time with the member for Durham East and the hard-working member for Huron county, Mrs Johns.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): How hard-working?

Mr Baird: Very hard-working; one of the hardest-working members around here.

I'm pleased to speak on this bill because I believe very strongly in the important role that small business plays in the province of Ontario. Small business is the backbone of Ontario's economy. I think you'd be surprised that 80% of the jobs created in the province are created by small business, those hard-working folks who operate a store or who, in my part of the province, do research and development in computer design and other networking solutions.

That's incredibly important, because we've seen more than 400,000 net new jobs created in Ontario. That's tremendously good news, and small business has led the way 80% of the time. Whether those jobs are in the banks, in the riding of the member for Fort York, or in small businesses in Nepean, they're creating jobs, and we very much support small business.

The survival of many of these valuable contributors to Ontario's economic well-being was threatened by property tax increases, increases caused by the reluctance of many municipalities to fully use the tools that the provincial government, through legislation, gave them to limit assessment-related tax increases.

1600

We listened very carefully to small business owners, and they told us. We responded by proposing mandatory measures that would guarantee protection for small business. This protection would provide small businesses with the certainty they need to make decisions about investing, about expanding and about creating jobs.

Since we began our mandate, we've cut taxes and brought tax fairness to millions of Ontarians. We are creating a positive environment where small business can grow, prosper and create jobs. For many years, Ontario used to be the economic engine of Canada. We were a magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity.

But over the years of socialist government, we became known as the mismanaged debtor of Canada: overtaxed, overregulated and overgoverned. After those five years of socialist mismanagement, the NDP got elected. The NDP got elected after those socialist years of mismanagement and they made the matter worse. It got demonstrably worse after those five years of Liberal socialist regimes, when Ontarians elected a New Democratic Party government in 1990. We tried the socialists; they didn't work. Then we tried the NDP, and they didn't work either.

This government has sought to create an environment that will encourage the private sector to create jobs. It will

help small business to create jobs, because we believe and so many folks I am privileged to represent in Barrhaven and Bells Corners and Manordale and south Nepean know that government can't create jobs. Government can only create the environment where the private sector, where small business people, can create jobs.

This government believes strongly in the entrepreneurial spirit, the rugged individualism of small business people across the province of Ontario. We believe very strongly in that. It's important indeed that we recognize the important contribution that small business continues to play in our growing economy.

Let me describe how Bill 79 would ensure that municipalities do the same, bring tax fairness to business property owners. Bill 79 would guarantee that no commercial or industrial property owner would face a tax increase related to property tax reform of more than 10% in 1998, and a further 5% in each of 1999 and the year 2000, well into the next millennium.

These proposed limits would apply to the municipal and education portions of the property tax on commercial and industrial property in all municipalities across the province except Toronto, which went even further and adopted the 2.5% tax. I want to congratulate the city of Toronto for protecting their small business.

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you please check for a quorum?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Yes, I will.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: I want to thank mon cher collègue, the member for Fort York, for helping secure a larger audience for me. I greatly appreciate it, M. Marchese.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): The only member from the NDP who has chosen to come in today.

Mr Baird: He is so concerned. In fact, he is the only member of his party here to listen to this speech. I congratulate him for that.

When the Minister of Finance introduced Bill 79, he said that at the standing committee he would propose amendments that would also protect multi-residential properties under the very same formula.

Bill 79 would protect residential ratepayers. Municipalities would be required to ensure that the limit on tax increases on business properties is funded from within the commercial, industrial and multi-residential property classes.

With respect to tax increases above 10, 5 and 5, any municipal property tax increase beyond the proposed limits would be the result of decisions by municipal governments to increase spending. I want to very sincerely say to my colleague the member for Fort York, we don't want municipalities to raise taxes. It's not a helpful thing. In Nepean it's minus 2. Do you know what the minus means? It's called a tax cut. Because folks on the Nepean

council, led by Councillor Jan Harder, know that cutting taxes creates jobs. Nepean is in fact one of the economic engines of Ontario. That small reduction, albeit symbolic, shows the pro-job creation mentality of the hard-working taxpayers and councillors within the city of Nepean. We should acknowledge that.

The only other reason that property could experience increases above the 10, 5, 5 limit is if there are physical changes to the property such as new construction or renovation, a change in use such as from commercial to industrial or a change in vacancy such as a vacant property becoming occupied. I'm going to tell you, there are a lot of vacant properties becoming occupied in my part of the province. The new jobs —

Mr Marchese: Prosperity.

Mr Baird: — the new prosperity, the member for Fort York said. The member for Fort York represents a constituency that's home of the big five banks. We don't have those large billion-dollar enterprises in great number in Nepean. Nepean's economy isn't like the economy of Fort York; the economy of Fort York depends on the big banks and the big investment houses to lure jobs and investment. In Nepean, we depend on small business. That's why we're bringing in Bill 79.

The 10, 5, 5 limit would not apply to farmland awaiting development or to properties subject to payments in lieu of taxes, such as properties owned by the federal or provincial government. The province is committed to paying its fair share of property tax, and we fully expect that our federal counterparts will do the same.

I want to speak to this issue with respect to the federal payments in lieu. We are working very closely with the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, and the deputy mayor, Alkan Higdon, and folks of the region, Merv Beckstead and Bob Chiarelli, to ensure that these changes are applicable to Ottawa-Carleton and applicable in that the federal government will pay its fair share.

There has been some suggestion by members of the media that the federal government won't pay their fair share, that they will somehow try to use these amendments designed to help small business to get out of their obligations. The federal government, for the first time, was prepared to state on the record that they were going to pay every single cent that they were supposed to pay. There's some suggestion that they won't, and I'm very disappointed in that suggestion, because I believed Paul Martin when Paul Martin said the cutbacks to the municipalities and the provinces would stop.

With the changes this government introduced to the property assessment system, for the first time the federal government was going to pay the equivalent of the business occupancy tax. What we want them to do is treat Ottawa the same way they treat Hull, to pay their fair share of property taxes. That's not too much to ask. But instead there has been some suggestion that the federal government will use this opportunity to whack Ontario again.

Mr Marchese: Whack 'em good.

Mr Baird: "Whack 'em good," the member for Fort York said. We reject that. We sincerely hope that they'll

live up to their obligations and pay their fair share. They say they want to pay taxes just like everyone else. They should start off in the same position as every other business. They've said for years that they just want to pay taxes like everyone else. But interestingly, when you look at what they pay, it actually isn't what they owe.

The assessment system will give them a valuation on a particular office building, let's say, and they only pay 80 cents or 90 cents on the dollar. How many other taxpayers in Ontario could say, "We're only going to pay 80 or 90 cents on the dollar"? When the member for Fort York gets his tax bill — probably much larger than mine, because I'm sure he lives in a much more fancy place than I live in, in Bells Corners — he doesn't have the choice to pay 80 cents on the dollar. He has to pay every cent he owes or Mel Lastman will come and shut him down.

Mr Marchese: He'll whack me good.

Mr Baird: He'll whack him good, indeed. But the federal government just refused to pay. They say they don't agree with the assessment and it's tough luck on Jim Watson or Bob Chiarelli or Mary Pitt or anyone in Ottawa-Carleton; they won't pay their fair share. We're hoping they live up to their commitment and we are certainly committed to working with the city of Ottawa, the city of Nepean, the city of Gloucester and the regional government in Ottawa-Carleton to ensure they can hold the line on taxes once again, just like they did this year.

1610

In fact, in Nepean they cut taxes this year. Do you know who's going to find out that Nepean cut taxes this year? The new member of the New Democratic Party caucus, when he runs for re-election in the part of that riding, the majority of that riding, in the city of Nepean. We certainly look forward to hosting him as the NDP candidate in one of the two Nepean ridings.

We gave a perfect number of tools to the municipalities. To achieve the 10, 5 and 5 limits, the municipalities would be able to choose from a range of tools available under the Ontario fair assessment system, the tools we urged them to use all along.

Mr Marchese: What kind of tools?

Mr Baird: Let me review these tools for you. Municipalities could choose to phase in reform-related tax increases and decreases over an eight-year period. They could use graduated tax rates to apply lower tax rates to lower-valued properties. They could adopt any and all of the optional property classes and set different tax rates for each class. Member for Fort York, they could offer rebates.

Mr Marchese: Is that a tool?

Mr Baird: They could adopt a 2.5% cap, as they did in the member for Fort York's riding, in every year: 1998, 1999 and the year 2000. If passed, Bill 79 would provide municipalities with one more tool: the 10, 5 and 5 cap, that would cap increases at 10% in 1998, a further 5% in 1999 and another 5% in the year 2000.

We provided municipalities with ample time to analyze the impacts of reassessment. In August 1997, we gave them the preliminary reassessment data and preliminary

transition ratios. To help municipalities work with this data, we offered training sessions. We also provided municipalities with time to become familiar with the tools. We introduced a phase-in and tax relief for seniors in January 1997. In June 1997, we introduced graduated tax rates and rebates for charities to help those hard-working people across Ontario who work for various charities. I can recall having the director of the Ottawa Food Bank, Greg Joy, come in to see me. He made a very strong case in lobbying the government for assistance for the work of the Ottawa Food Bank, and I totally agreed. A good number of my caucus colleagues lobbied for charities in their constituencies, and the Minister of Finance certainly agreed.

We announced rebates, optional property classes and the 2.5% cap in March 1998, which was used in the city of Toronto. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing offered municipalities the on-line property tax analysis computer program. This allowed municipalities to analyze the impacts of reassessment and the effects of using various property tax tools.

To give municipalities more time, we extended the deadline to August 14, 1998, for choosing optional property classes, graduated tax rates, the 2.5% cap and to establish their tax ratios. There was no legislative deadline for municipalities to adopt phase-ins or rebates.

The tools were optional. Municipalities had the flexibility to choose a combination of tools to ensure that moving to the new system was fair to taxpayers. We relied upon them to make appropriate choices for their taxpayers. However, while some did, many municipalities failed to use the tools or they failed to use them effectively.

I can tell you, in my home community, in Ottawa-Carleton, we heard a good number of concerns from hard-working small business people, whether they were in Ottawa or Nepean or Stittsville, Greely, Manotick or Richmond. I have the Manotick Messenger from Wednesday, October 21, 1998, a story by Joe Banks. I'd like to quote from it briefly, if I may.

"In Osgoode alone, there is an average 50% hike in business property taxes with 165 business owners paying \$400,000 more in taxes this year. Rideau township is facing similar increases." That was an incredibly powerful argument.

The article went on: "In his opening statement to the more than 100 people on hand for the Greely session, Osgoode Mayor Doug Thompson described as 'devastating' the scale of increases the owners are seeing.

"Changes to the business tax system must be made...to help us survive one of the most critical times in our history," he added.

"We implore you to work at changes to allow the business community to operate, as in the past, in a profitable manner."

I certainly strongly agree with the mayor of Osgoode township, Doug Thompson. He fought very hard for his small business people, as did the mayor of Stittsville and Rideau township as well. This government not only took the time to listen and reflect but to respond. A good

number of members from across the province took that time as well, and we had a number of very good meetings where members from across Ontario were able to strongly represent their constituents and the needs and interests of small business, because members, certainly in my caucus, recognize the important role that small business people play in economic development and in job creation.

We listened to small business people and to local officials around the province, reflected on that and then acted to ensure that small business is protected.

As a result, municipalities issued their tax bills in August, September and October, but many businesses faced unmanageable tax increases, as I've just said. Bill 79 would give municipalities even more time, until the end of the year, to choose the tools they need to achieve the 10, 5 and 5 limit.

Adjusting 1998 rates is important too. If Bill 79 is passed, we would work with the municipalities to ensure that 1998 rates are adjusted quickly, whether by refunds, supplementary tax notices, or adjusting the 1999 interim tax bill, and we are prepared to help with the cost of doing this.

To provide immediate relief to business, under Bill 79 business property owners who have not paid already billed reform-related tax increases of more than 10% in 1998 would not have to pay interest and penalties on those amounts above 10%.

We recognize that some taxpayers expecting decreases will not get them as quickly as they had otherwise anticipated. However, we could not stand by and let the small businesses face increases, some as high as 600%. This situation was exceptionally real. Speaking to one small business owner who lives in my riding, who operates a store at the Richmond mall, apparently half the tenants at the Richmond mall were in danger of losing their business. That's why this government is acting to help small business, to ensure that we move to a fairer tax system and that the municipalities have the tools to ensure that the transition is smooth.

In the year 2001, we will continue working with municipalities and businesses to ensure that tax changes are fair and manageable when the 10, 5 and 5 limit ends in the year 2001. There will be another reassessment for the 2001 taxation year. In 2001, municipalities will have tools such as the graduated tax rates and optional property classes available. The province may also make more tools available.

By 2001, businesses and municipalities with above-average education tax rates will have benefited from three years of the education tax cuts. I did want to speak briefly to that. I think too often we forget about the terrible tax increases that have disadvantaged some businesses across the province. In this year's budget, the Minister of Finance responded to a lot of concern from right across Ontario about the distribution of commercial-industrial education tax rates by municipalities.

In the budget this year, there were some substantial tax reductions in this area. In my own home region of Ottawa-Carleton, the industrial tax rate for education will be cut

by 12.7% over the next seven or eight years, and that's indeed very good news. In the city of Toronto, there was a very high rate, and taxes will be cut by some \$400 million. I know that members like the member for High Park-Swansea have been complaining about those high taxes in Toronto for many years. Finally, a government has the courage to act and to cut those taxes.

I would be remiss if I didn't go over some of the other numbers: in Brant county, a 21.6% cut in the industrial taxes; in Elgin county, a 19.2% cut in industrial taxes; in Essex county, the tax cut will be 22% for industrial taxpayers; in Grey county, it'll be 26.4% for industrial taxpayers; in Hamilton-Wentworth, because of the hard work of people like Toni Skarica and Lillian Ross and Trevor Pettit and Ed Doyle, the industrial tax rate will fall by 44% over the next seven or eight years.

Those members certainly fought hard for their constituents, because that's a significant \$20-million tax cut, where previous governments lacked the courage to step in and take over those cuts. In Kent county, there's a 11.2% cut. In Leeds and Grenville counties, the industrial rate will fall by 39%. In Niagara region — the member for Niagara Falls and the member for St Catharines-Brock are here — there's a 37% cut in industrial taxes; in Northumberland, 27%; in Rainy River, the home of the New Democratic Party leader, 21%; and in Renfrew county, the riding of my good friend Leo Jordan, a 35% cut. That is substantial and real. Those cuts taking place beginning this year over the next eight years are good news for industrial and commercial taxpayers, as they may be, around the province.

1620

By the year 2001, communities will have completed the restructuring and streamlining of their local services. This should make municipal tax cuts achievable in many areas. I've already said that in Nepean we cut taxes this year by 2%, and that's because of a council dedicated to protecting the taxpayer. I give credit again to hard-working councillors like Jan Harder and others.

The assessment appeal deadline and gross leases: Bill 79 proposes to extend the deadline for filing assessment appeals for 1998 to December 31 of this year. For subsequent years, the deadline will be March 31 of the taxation year.

Bill 79 also proposes to extend to December 15, 1998, the deadline for landlords with eligible gross leases to notify tenants of the obligation to pay property taxes or business improvement area charges for 1998. We are responding to the concerns of landlords who are unable to comply with the original notice deadlines due to the unique circumstances of this transitional year.

In conclusion, by ensuring fair property taxes for small business, Bill 79, the Fairness for Property Taxpayers Act, 1998, would play an important part in Ontario's positive business climate, which has made Ontario one of the best places in the world to live, work, invest and create jobs, and that's tremendously important.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my privilege to comment on Bill 79 this afternoon. To follow the

member for Nepean is rather a dubious task. He has pretty well covered all the pertinent background on this particular legislation.

I just want to say personally, at the beginning, a big thank you to the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, for listening to the backbenchers and the members of his caucus especially. We were listening to constituents and hearing the alarming news in late October of 100% and 200% tax increases for the small business operator. Clearly, they're already paying more than their fair share.

It begs the question, why should we change? I always try to look to the motive of change. This government is in a position to make changes, where necessary, and there is a need for change. Every government over the past decade has tried to deal with this issue of assessment reform and tax reform. First, in the 1970s, the province took over the assessment system to correct it. No one was prepared or had the courage to make the needed change.

AMO has been on record calling for reform to the assessment system for many, many years. I can also tell you that in the region of Durham they have been on the record calling for changes to the assessment system. I want to read into the record from their report just issued here in 1998, referred to as F-76:

"The region of Durham is on record as fully supporting provincial government initiatives to reform the system of property taxation in Ontario. The region of Durham worked diligently to bring long overdue reform to the system of property taxation in Durham, using those legislative tools which proved most effective in easing the transition to the new system. The new tax structure was designed in full consultation with local municipalities and with input from a number of affected groups."

It's clear that all publicly elected people — even in my term on local and regional council, during four of which I chaired municipal finance for our municipality. I can tell you, this whole issue has been overstudied for the last decade, and I'm going to cover that in my comments this afternoon.

The assessment system was broken and everyone knew it. No one would do anything about it, however. The Liberals backed away. I could document that for you, but they had an opportunity, addressed it, and backed away from it. The NDP — you remember when people lined up in the streets and were protesting? — backed away from it. They didn't have the courage to make the changes. Only this government has the proven track record and the commitment to doing the right thing. That's really what this whole discussion is about this afternoon: having trust in the government to do the right thing.

The other part of the equation of assessment reform, of course, is municipal tax reform. Again, this has been discussed for the last 10 years and more. Let me just give you some of the background.

There has been study after study, and no decisions. You may recall the historical documents. The disentanglement report was all about the same issue. What did they do with it? They filed it. Under the previous government, the Fair

Tax Commission went around the province and listened to people on, how do we disentangle? Who pays for what? Of course, we came in with the Crombie commission, which was called the WDW, the Who Does What commission, looking for solutions to making it clear to the taxpayer who pays for what.

We've always had a position that there's only one taxpayer.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): You didn't do what you said with social services.

Mr O'Toole: I will say in response to the member for Kingston and The Islands that there is a Liberal policy, and it's well known. It's tax and spend. That's their policy. Don't ever forget it. Their record, if you want to look back to what their solution was, was to spend more money to solve the problem. They never, ever went to the root of the problem; they spent more money. They had the highest years of revenue in this province and also the revenue was spent; not readjusted or redirected, as was the call.

At least the NDP had a plan, or at least it appeared they had a plan. The first attempt was called the expenditure reduction plan. This was when I was in local government. They backed away from it. None of the municipalities would agree with them. Respectfully, we have many municipalities that are working against us.

They also had another plan, the unfortunate, now famous social contract, which was really an attempt to control municipal or public spending. Unfortunately, their legacy is that they doubled the deficit and they doubled the debt. That will never be forgotten, and that's why the people of Ontario were fed up and that's why they voted for Mike Harris, the Taxfighter, and Ernie Eves, the finance minister, who was able to carry this inordinate task of trying to get it right.

What's the difference between the Liberals and the NDP and this government? Well, I'll tell you: They had 65 tax increases and we've had 66 tax decreases. That's the fundamental difference. We're committed to reducing the tax load on the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario.

So that's some of the background.

Arguably, change is difficult. Everyone here knows that. Certainly members of this caucus have had to be sensitive and listen to their constituents' concerns and try to explain and give them the bigger picture, that we were spending a million dollars an hour more than we were taking in in revenue. Everybody, once they see the bigger picture, understands that change was important.

Perhaps some municipalities don't want this to work. Don't leave it for me to say this, but I think there may be another agenda to try and balk this government long enough so that the plan won't work. Arguably, the opposition has a duty to oppose, but now they've backed away from it. The president of AMO at the time, Mundell, tried to get agreement. There were so many municipalities that were so used to this spend mentality that they never re-examined elimination of duplication and waste. Remember, there's only one taxpayer.

With the old, complicated, unfair system of assessment, combined with the old, complicated system of mill rates and a complicated system of shared funding arrangements between the province and municipal responsibilities, it's about time we did disentangle or sort this out. We called it Who Does What — very, very important that we sort it out.

The taxpayers that I talk to in the street every day — this weekend I was in downtown Bowmanville, and somebody said: "You know, this is the first time in years that I've really paid attention to my tax bill. You've really got people thinking about it." That's probably the strongest outcome from all this outrage and debate in the papers: People are really paying attention. They're going to hold publicly elected people responsible for the taxpaying decisions they make. They're fed up with politicians pointing fingers — federally, provincially, municipally. They just want this system fixed. I believe that we clearly have the government in place now that will fix it. We have always staked out the position that there's only one taxpayer.

1630

Getting into the substance of the bill, I want to admit very clearly at this point that there have been a number of bills dealing with the assessment and taxation changes. I'll cover that to some extent later, but I just want to put on the record that I am aware there have been a number of bills to try to get this right.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Seven.

Mr O'Toole: The member opposite says there have only been seven. I think the right response to that is that if it takes 10 to get it right, then there are two more bills.

It's a very complex system. Mr Phillips, you would know it's a complicated system. You've said it all along. What you should try to do is bring forward positive suggestions. Criticism is not exactly in order today. The taxpayer is fed up with this pointing of fingers. Whether it's health care or taxpayers, are you telling them the truth? That's the question. Are you telling them exactly your plan and policies? I haven't heard them in this House. I've heard lots of criticism.

Generally, local taxpayers should pay for local services. I think that's fairly understandable. Local taxpayers should pay for parks, recreation, animal control, fire service, tax collection, bylaw enforcement and a series of other planning and public works issues.

If you look through the different levels of what the taxpayer is paying for, at the upper-tier level, those taxpayers should be paying for those services. They should understand what the level of service is and why their taxes are going up. It should be right in the tax bill: "Policing costs more; here's what it is going to cost you." Promise this; it costs that. Tell the people what you're going to do. Be upfront about it. Police services is an upper-tier responsibility, social services delivery, planning and public works and public health.

If you go through the list here and move up the layers, the province ideally should pay for health care, education,

welfare, MTO, Attorney General, all the other ministries, their responsibilities.

Let's finish the equation here. To complete the equation, your tax dollars to the federal government pay for our higher level of services like our military, public defence, foreign affairs, the courts system, and other federal responsibilities.

Yes, our changes are challenging, and yes, we have had some six or seven pieces of legislation. In my opinion, if it takes more legislation to get it right, then you can count on us to do it. The people of Ontario know there is only one government with the courage to keep their promises.

I can tell you that after the region of Durham and the local councillors delivered the tax bills in October, my phone was ringing off the hook. Small business operators were stopping me in Blackstock, Orono, Hampton, Port Perry, Prince Albert, Bowmanville, throughout my riding of Durham East. Car dealers were really hard hit, hardware stores, small restaurants, a rental business — I have one particular rental business where his taxes were going up by some 300%. He came to me; he released the information on his assessment, and with his tax increase, he told me he was going out of business.

That wasn't acceptable to me, and I thank our Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, for listening not only to me but to other members of caucus who brought forward specific examples to demonstrate to him what this change, the way it was implemented at the municipal level, was doing to small business. I know it's been repeated by the member for Nepean that small business creates 80% of the jobs in this province, and certainly given that infrastructure and the jobs people want, we have to work with them. Of course, that is exactly what this bill is about. Bill 79 is about that.

We introduced a set of tools very early on, in one of the second amendment bills, and those tools I think were brought forward by the new Toronto city council, Mayor Lastman. I'd like to review some of the tools here that are already in place. Then I look at the tax policies and measures within the various municipalities around, and many of them did not use the tools. They've dumped the whole load of this thing on to commercial-industrial.

We allowed tools to mitigate these changes. Going back to the fundamentals, everyone here — I believe the member for Scarborough-Agincourt agrees as well that you would have to go on record as saying this assessment system change has been requested. No question about that; it's not even in dispute here. But we did recognize that there would need to be a transitional period.

Tax relief for low-income and seniors with disabilities: That was one of the tools that some of the municipalities chose to use; some did not.

Rebates to charities or similar kinds of organizations, where they were operating out of commercial buildings, was an option for municipalities.

Phasing-in was always an option. In fact, my municipality of Clarington and Durham region chose to use the phase-in tool.

Capping: Metro Toronto brought in the 2.5% cap. We heard all the people in the streets. They came together with a plan. I believe they sat down with Finance Minister Ernie Eves.

Toronto's been quiet. There hasn't been any outrage in Toronto. Why? Because they used the tax measures and they treated people fairly. That's all we have to do. Don't hide it from the residential taxpayer and dump it on the commercial. Spread it fairly. The changes have to be managed fairly.

Tax ratios and rates: There are seven property tax classes. They were allowed to use subclasses, like large commercial, medium commercial, small commercial, like a shopping plaza, a strip mall, and a pizza store. That would be large, medium and small — pizza. But they are also able to use subclasses in industrial as well. Again, many of the municipalities didn't use the tools.

You have to ask yourself, why didn't they use the tools? Is this not sort of a conspiracy to embarrass the Harris government, to make this as onerous as possible? I'm convinced, without much empirical evidence except the outrage it caused — and yet there were tools used in Toronto that worked. Why did some municipalities choose not to use them, while others did? The question begs to be answered: Was it pure politics at the municipal level?

I think it's quite tragic. If that's the case, I believe there probably is municipal support for a Liberal government, because they won't be straightforward with the people. This is clearly hard medicine. There is no one on this side avoiding that issue. We are making a fundamental change to a fair assessment system so that everyone pays their fair share, and we're providing transitional tools to get to the system or the Utopia, the ideal, that our finance minister has brought forward.

Rebates for business were available as well. There were a series of other tools, and this bill introduces, a little more strongly, I might add, some of the tools. This is quite a small bill, a bit technical, but it's important to recognize that our finance minister has listened. On November 5, he introduced the intention to make some significant changes, to more or less require municipalities to spread the load within the property class. Those getting a huge tax break — we all heard them saying in Toronto that the bank towers were going to get a big tax break and the small pizza store was going to get a big tax increase, a whack. We've changed that. We've said clearly that's not acceptable, and we have changed it, because within each property class, this whole functional change has to be revenue-neutral, whether it's industrial, commercial or multi-residential. This legislation covers those particular sectors, the property classes.

Bill 79, introduced on November 5 by Finance Minister Ernie Eves — I'm going to take a couple of more minutes. I know the member for Huron is waiting anxiously. The bill amends the Assessment Act, the Municipal Act, the Assessment Review Board Act and the Education Act in relation to property taxes. The following are the significant changes, and I think it's important. It is a rather technical bill, but we're trying to make taxes a transparent

issue: "I pay these taxes for these services." No more of this complicated mill rate. No more of this shared funding situation. "I should pay; these are the services."

It doesn't necessarily mandate municipalities to provide a higher level of service. Those are popular decisions made at the grassroots, where the decisions should be made. They shouldn't come to provincial or federal partners and say: "Where's the money for the new arena? Where's the money for the new skateboard rink?" Clearly, they should ask their taxpayers: "If you want this service, it's going to cost you, at a household level, this much money."

I think this transparency is long overdue. We're prepared to take the hard medicine and have a transitional plan to get us there, to where everyone understands what they are paying for and what they're getting.

1640

In my municipality, Madam Speaker, you would know that it's small, mainly rural and the farmers were for years worried about the farm tax rebate. With the federation of agriculture, all the people have been lobbying for years for us to sort this out. We paid these huge taxes upfront on the farm property and the business and then got the farm tax rebate, but it was never in legislation. It was always handled like a grant, but they had to pay it to get the rebate. We've solved that problem. We've looked at the property and the use of the property, the issues with respect to value-added activities on farms, like apple storage, that would have to pay a commercial rate for a portion.

We're prepared to make the changes to make the system work. All I ask the opposition and third party to do is to be reasonable and bring forward some positive suggestions. Don't go on another rant that's —

Mr Gerretsen: We have.

Mr O'Toole: We've had the time to do that and it's time to get on and fix this problem, and our minister is, I believe, doing it. We're going to make the system work for the people of Ontario.

There are a few things that should be drawn to your attention. The bill will make a number of changes with respect to such powers including ensuring that a number of them can be used within 1998. So people who have already gotten their tax bill — arguably late; I admit that it's late — have spent half the money. I admit that. No one is perfect. What they're saying is that the changes can still be made, and people who haven't paid the last instalment on their taxes will not be penalized. The member for Nepean has explained that in some detail.

Opting into the optional property classes: That is still available. Setting tax ratios for different property classes: That tool is still available. Delegating the power to set tax ratios: That's available. Phasing in 1998 assessment-related tax changes — remember, this is assessment-related. For instance, if I had a small business or, for that matter, an apartment building that I did improvements on, of course the assessment would go up; obviously your assessment and your complementary taxation would go up. But if things stayed the same year over year, you should

be paying 10% more than you were in 1997. That's the whole deal here.

Another very important part of it that may get missed in this whole dialogue is about small business. Small business operators in my riding came to me and pointed out to me — I didn't know until they pointed it out — that they were owners of four, five and six apartment buildings. Generally, they were retired people. Their investment was to buy a seven-plex or an eight-plex apartment, two or three of them. What they found out was that these property classes of multi-residential were getting clobbered. They couldn't possibly pass those huge increases on to their tenants. Arguably, this is going to help tenants. They're no longer going to get a huge whack in taxes. The building next door, I believe a six-plex, wasn't classed as multi-residential, therefore they were paying the same tax rate as residential. The building next door, an eight-unit building, would be paying the multi-residential rate.

You say, "What's the difference?" There's quite a difference. If you look at the multi-residential rate, it was 3.40 in our municipality. That's 3.4 times your assessment. I look at the residential rate and it's 1.54. So just think of those two buildings. Think of who's actually paying it. Not the landlord — the landlord was talking to me — it's the tenants. The people who can't afford to buy homes were getting whacked, and whom were they getting whacked by? Basically, a municipal decision of who pays what share of the load. How much of the tax burden is raised on commercial, industrial, multi-residential and residential?

What I saw happening was that they knew the residential taxpayer was just waiting for this tax problem. They were reluctant to pass five cents of this redistribution on to the residential portion, who really, arguably consume. They're the ones who go to the parks, go to the libraries and use the services, but they pass it on to the business. Clearly, that's what they did, because a small working business — a pizza store, a small restaurant, a hardware store — those people pay for the library and the fire service at home.

But what was the commercial rate? I'm going to tell you the commercial rate. The commercial rate was 3.72. What does a small pizza store actually consume in terms of municipal services? What's he paying for? He's already paying for the library at home. He's paying for the fire truck at home on his residential tax. But for years, because there are fewer commercial property owners, they've been carrying an inordinate share of the tax load for years. When you get to the corporate level, the industrial tax, many of them are absentee landlords. There, if I look at the large industrial units, 8.84 is the tax rate. Imagine what that does. We're wondering how we can subsidize business to create jobs. Take the load off.

Local taxes should pay for local services. There's not a person in this chamber this afternoon who wouldn't want more services for their constituents, whether they're municipal, provincial or, for that matter, federal. We'd like a better army, we'd like a better navy, we'd like a

better ice arena for our children to play hockey on and a nicer library for our children to avail themselves of its service. Now we've straightened this out. Local taxes should pay for local services.

When the Liberal mayor comes around and says to you, "I promise you a skateboard park," the next question the educated, informed taxpayer is going to ask is: "How are you going to pay for it? I'm already paying enough taxes." You ask the taxpayers in this province, ask them. Not one of them would deny the United Way or a women's shelter or anything in the charitable sense, but to have a bureaucrat, the tax man come in and say, "This is what you're going to pay," that's where we've gone overboard. We pay the highest taxes. I've got a report here that shows that we're clearly the highest-taxed jurisdiction in our municipal taxes and in our business sector.

Mr Gerretsen: You don't know what you're talking about.

Mr O'Toole: I would challenge the member for Kingston and The Islands, who says I don't know what I'm talking about. I'll tell you, I'm waiting for your comments to find out — you ran in Kingston as the mayor. I know a number of people from Kingston who would question whether or not you left them in good shape, and here you have the audacity to say that I don't know. I can certainly tell you that I talk to the small taxpayers, my constituents; I listen to them. I told them, "It's not easy, but we're promising you one thing: We're not going to increase your taxes." They believed Premier Harris. They know this Conservative government is committed to freezing taxes and spending. Every Liberal I've ever talked to, including you and the health critic, Mr Kennedy, their solution is to spend more money. That's exactly what you'll do. The people have to know this.

I challenge the people of Ontario to ask, in the next year or 18 months, "What are their policies?" I have the red book. What did they promise in health care? They promised to spend \$17 billion. We're spending almost \$19 billion, and they're still whining. They probably would have been spending, what? They would have broken their promise. The thing we haven't done is break our promise.

Mr Gerretsen: The people are whining. They're not getting services.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

Mr O'Toole: I have managed to get off topic a small bit on this important bill. I'm looking forward to the member for Huron speaking, if she's interested in taking over. But I just want to conclude that I believe these changes were necessary. I believe it demonstrates that our minister and our Premier listened. This legislation addresses an inordinate burden that was being transferred to the shoulders of small business, which creates all the jobs in Ontario. We need to be there to support them, not just as a government. All members in this House, I would expect, would support this particular bill in principle alone; if you don't, then it's a vote against small business. I'm going to be requesting a recorded vote.

During the coming election, I want the numbers. You haven't voted for a tax cut yet, not one. So pay attention, voters. That's who I'm talking to. My constituents, pay attention. When they come knocking on the door, ask them what they're going to do. That's what that whole ad business on television is about, what this particular one here is on about. We want to know what your plan is. All of the people of Ontario deserve to know. Ask Minister Young from Ottawa, ask some of the federal members what their plans are, and you'll get the same message: They're out of the country.

Anyway, it has been my pleasure to share my thoughts on Bill 79 this afternoon. I'll be supporting this legislation. You can count on it.

1650

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): It's my pleasure to talk for a few minutes about this bill because I, like my colleagues who have spoken before me, am concerned about small business also. In Huron county, and I'm going to give a little bit of the rural perspective to this, the jobs that are created in my riding are created by small businesses. There's no question about that. We need to ensure that small businesses stay viable, that they're able to grow, they're able to create jobs in our communities.

What has happened in my riding is that I've taken a number of calls about this whole tax assessment deal over the last six to eight weeks. I think it's important to share some of the issues with some of the people who are at home.

I want to first say that one of the things that I thought was very important for the listeners in Huron county and rural Ontario was what my colleague from Durham was talking about when he was talking about the agricultural community and the farm tax rebate. For years and years we were concerned about farm tax rebate: Would it be there? How much would it be? This has alleviated that problem. You don't have the cheques coming back and forth, where the farmers are financing the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture. This is a better process from that side.

I'd also like to say that in Bill 16 — and the opposition will no doubt talk in a few minutes about how many times we've come into this bill and what we've tried to change about this bill — we set out tools that would be able to smooth the flow. We knew there would be many changes as we progress through. We did give mitigation tools but what we did was we said, "Please take the opportunity to use these mitigation tools," and now we're saying, "Use these mitigation tools."

It's not acceptable for small businesses to face a 40% tax increase in their businesses. If that happens in Huron county, I'll have businesses going out of business and I'll have people losing jobs as a result of that. That's why we felt there was a need to do something about this.

I had a call from a man in Seaforth. I'd like to say that I haven't cleared names, so I'm just going to talk about numbers. I should have done that; with a little more time, I might have. Because we had gone to market value assessment in the last 10 years, I didn't have the changes

in assessment that people might have had in Toronto. What happened in this particular case was that the man had an assessment change of less than 5%. His assessment went up by less than 5%, yet his taxes payable increased by 45%. So what we had was a difference in taxes of \$12,000 payable in 1997 and \$17,500 in 1998. Even the best manager of a business can't deal with a change that happens over a year that is that substantial.

I want you to realize that it wasn't as a result of the tax assessment, so it had to be the taxes payable. What should have happened there was the tools should have been used to mitigate that. If this same business owner had been in Toronto, he would have faced a 2.5% increase over the years. We have to do something for a business owner who is in that situation.

I also had a business association from one of the small communities call me and they were frustrated with the system and with the businesses that got a substantial increase. They advised me that the municipalities didn't know how to handle the legislation. They didn't know how to implement the changes, they didn't know what tools they should take into consideration. Being at the lower level, there was a certain amount of miscommunication between the upper tier and the lower tier about how they could handle those issues.

Once again, they have another stab at going back to this and making it such that businesses on our local main streets in rural Ontario have an ability to go forward without having huge expenditures that weren't calculated when they were working on their budgets at the end of the year.

I had a particularly sad case in Exeter, which is where I live, of course, and raise my family. We had some rental units and their taxes went up substantially. This family was in a difficult situation because they had had a lot of illness in the family and they couldn't react quickly enough to it. Once again, this will allow this small business to be able to continue on. It will allow them over a three- or a four-year period to even lift their revenues so that they can charge for that, if that's the way they have to go in the future. But they need to be able to have time to plan. By taking in effect these mitigation tools, then we'll have small businesses be able to plan in the future and as they get that opportunity, we'll be able to move through that.

I've heard the Premier say a number of times that over a three- or four-year period, as some of the great new policies of the Progressive Conservatives are set into fact, we should see the taxes in municipalities come down. In fact, he has promised to look every year at the education tax to see if there's not a way to reduce that and for the province to carry the burden through some other method so we can help in the property tax area.

I think it's important to recognize that everything needs time. Businesses need time to react. As people who know me here will know, I worked in small business for a number of years before I came here, in the financial side of it, and I know that people, especially in my area, are running at a very tight level. They don't have dollars to

just all of sudden come out for different expenditures, especially in the retail side, which is the major part of what happens in my small communities. We need to give them the opportunity to exist as a small business, to plan as a small business and to move forward. The future of small businesses cannot be threatened.

I would like to say from the side of the municipalities that it must have been difficult to digest the changes that were happening as a result of the change in taxes. We all know it was unfair, it was inequitable and things had to be done. But in small communities — and I have 26 municipalities, each with a clerk-treasurer maybe dealing with a few commercial properties — it's difficult to ascertain how best to use these mitigation tools, because they might not have understood as they went through the process what the outcome would be. As we offer these tools one more time, I think we'll see municipalities be happy to take them into consideration and move forward. I think we'll see our businesses happier with our municipalities, our municipalities happier with the provincial government, and it will be a better process for all involved.

We're going to hear in a few minutes about how we've worked on this bill and we've come through a number of different changes. As I said earlier, I come from business, and the crime in small business is to do nothing, to not react, to not look and see how you can move forward, how you can capture more market share, how you can keep your business alive, how you can do those kinds of things — that's the crime. In politics — and I've only been here for three short years — it seems to me that the crime people on that side think of is if you do something and you have to go back and change it. This is the only business I've ever been in where the crime is to move forward and try and make Ontario a better place. We're going to hear this for the next two hours as we proceed through the talk of the opposition parties.

I think the crime is to have an inequitable tax system where everybody is paying at different assessed values, people are contributing at different levels. As we proceed through this system, it may require more changes, but what's happening is that the end result is a benefit to the people of Ontario. I'm pleased that we've come forward with this today.

One of the things I've been most touched by in the last few weeks has been the Premier saying that we came to fix government, not to be government and not to take on the government thing. Once again, by putting this bill forward we're fixing things that we've found aren't working.

I speak highly of the involvement of the minister and the parliamentary assistant, John Baird, who has done so much to move this process forward. I know it's a difficult concept, and I know that the members opposite tried for a number of terms to look at how they could better bring a system into place. It took a great deal of courage to bring this forward today.

I'd like to thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): We should have questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker: I know. There were three or four seconds left; I'm being fair here. Everybody calm down. Now, questions and comments?

Mr Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker; you're doing a fine job.

Just to comment briefly on some of the remarks made, one of the major impediments to change in the past was Mike Harris. I happen to carry around a couple of the campaign brochures. The city of Toronto was looking at changing its system of assessment, and Mike Harris fought it tooth and nail. In fact, this what Al Leach said: "My party and I will never support the imposition of market value assessment in Metro Toronto." Ms Bassett said, "The policy of the PC Party has always been that we will never impose market value assessment in Toronto."

The point I'm making here is that we now have market value assessment imposed by the province on the city of Toronto. I happen to be a supporter of market value assessment, but the cabinet ministers fought it tooth and nail. It is, as they say, a bit passing strange that Mike Harris now would say, "It's taken me some courage to get this," when all his courage was fighting it tooth and nail. The Chair will know it, because her government at the time was attempting to move the assessment system up in the city of Toronto, and Harris said, "I'll never impose it, never."

1700

I would say also, when the members say the opposition is not being helpful, that the first day we began debate on this issue we said, "You are going to take taxes up on small businesses and down on big businesses, particularly on the banks."

Mr Gerretsen: It was 10 months ago.

Mr Phillips: It was more than that. It was back last year in April. We said it was a mistake. We said, "Issue the impact studies so that the municipalities will know what this is going to do to them." You refused to do that. We said that people should have a right to appeal their assessments, not after they get their assessment notices, but after they get their tax bills. You voted that down. I can guarantee the public that we have moved amendment after amendment, every single one defeated by the government.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): This is really getting to be painful. I have in front of me the orders of the day, and it says "Property tax assessment: second reading of Bill 79." Not two, three, four, five, nor six; it's the seventh bill dealing with property taxation. If they keep doing it, then every bill is to correct the one before it. I guess if you can't get it, you try and try again and eventually you will get it right.

Both opposition parties told them at the beginning: "You're endeavouring a little too much, in fact a lot too much. First, you're breaking your promise," in the course of their recent campaign, when the writs had been issued and members opposite professed to walk on water. It's

right in the book. They say, "We will not have market value assessment."

You know what they did? They changed two words: "current value." If we were elsewhere, it could be construed as the height of hypocrisy. It's in the dictionary of synonyms: actual value, current value, market value. Call your broker, call the real estate agent and ask, "What is the current value of the property?" and he'll say a given amount of money: say \$300,000. Call him two minutes later and ask, "What is the actual value?" It'll be the same price. Call him again another five minutes later and ask, "What is the market value of that property?"

You should come here, speaker after speaker, and apologize for the confusion and the mess that you have systematically and deliberately created. You're not hurting but killing some of the small business people. You're not going to get away with it.

Mr Gerretsen: It's difficult to know where to start, but let me just make two points very quickly in the two minutes I have.

One of the members talked about the fact we're going to a system where you actually pay for what you're using. This clearly indicates that the member doesn't know what market value or current value assessment is all about. Market value assessment clearly states that if my house is worth twice as much as your house, I pay twice as much in taxes as you do. It's got nothing to do with whether I use more or fewer services in that municipality. I would strongly suggest to that particular member that he know what the system is that he's trying to implement here. He doesn't.

The other thing he mentioned is that there is some large conspiracy theory — that's using his terminology — going on among the municipalities in this province to make Mike Harris look bad. That's what he said. Isn't it ironic? Does he really expect the people of Ontario to believe, with the fact that two thirds of the municipalities in this province have felt it necessary this year to increase their taxes by 5% or more, that they all got together and said, "Let's make Mike Harris look bad by increasing the taxes this year by more than 5%?" That is the greatest absurdity that I've heard here yet.

Dealing very quickly with the member for Huron, she never did say why for those particular commercial property owners the taxes went up 50% when the assessment only went up 5%. Maybe it's got something to do with the amount of education dollars that are now being taken on the basis of regulation by the Minister of Finance out of your municipality.

Mr Silipo: This bill is a perfect example of what happens when a government goes down the road to reforming a particular area of public policy in a way that says that they know best, that they are not going to listen to anybody, that they know what will make most sense and what has to be done.

They do that despite the warnings that come from all sources, not just the opposition parties, but the people out there who actually have to live with the consequences of all of this, the people who have to implement these

changes, whether it's the bureaucrats locally or the local politicians or the groups themselves, small business groups being but one significant one of those groups. They said to this government: "Don't do this. If you're going to do this, certainly don't do this market value assessment introduction in the way in which you are going about doing it, because it will continue, it will create havoc and it will put many small businesses in jeopardy of surviving."

What happened? The government, in their traditional and usual fashion, persisted, pursued, went ahead, did what they wanted to do, oblivious to all that good advice. Then they had to come back — not apologetically, because they don't know how to do that — they came back time after time after time with one bill after another bill after another. This is now number seven in that sequence, trying to fix the problems that if they'd only listened — I don't say to us in the opposition, but if they'd only listened to those groups out there, the small business sector being but one, who had told them, "Don't do this, but if you're going to do it, don't do it in this way," they wouldn't have had to come back with Bill 7.

As it is, we're now here trying to fix the problem. In fixing that problem, we're now dealing with the incredible situation where some people have gotten actually reasonable decreases and now they're going to have to give some of the money back as a direct result of the actions that the Mike Harris government has put together.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: I listened to the last comments of the member for Dovercourt which said some people have got reasonable decreases and the government wants to take it back. I suggest that's the centrepiece of his own economic policy as the finance critic of the New Democratic Party, where the New Democratic Party wants to go back and take back the tax cut from everyone who makes more than \$80,000 a year.

It's funny that MPPs make \$78,000 and they've set the line. "We're going to keep the tax cut for ourselves, but everyone else will have to give theirs back." We wondered how they came across with the number. I've discovered it.

The Acting Speaker: On a point of order, quickly.

Mr Pouliot: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Let's set the facts straight here. There isn't one member of that sorry lot who doesn't make at least \$80,000 a year. Shame on you. Tell the truth.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. Take your seat, please. Member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: There in fact are. I do say, the one member of the New Democratic Party who took exception to that comment is probably the one member who would have to give back a substantial part of his tax cut, from the comments.

I want to thank the members for Scarborough-Agincourt, Lake Nipigon, Kingston and The Islands and Dovercourt. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt talked at great length about his party's position on taxes. We know they voted against the income tax cut, they

voted against the small business corporate tax cut, they voted against the employer health tax elimination for small business, they voted against the commercial and industrial education tax cuts, \$500 million of tax cuts. They voted against that too, so we know what they're against, but we don't know what they're for.

The member for Lake Nipigon talked of the seven tax bills that deal with this. I guess the member for Lake Nipigon wants us to bring in more omnibus bills. Rather than saying, "Here is the Ontario fair assessment system, here is the education tax bill and here is the bill that dealt with the assessment corporation," we should have lumped it all together and not listened on the second issue to small business people.

We're not prepared to do that. We want to help small business people and ensure they continue to create jobs.

1710

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Phillips: I am pleased to join the debate on Bill 79. I think any objective analysis will show this has been the most botched piece of public policy we've ever seen here. This is the seventh bill since May of last year, and confusion continues to reign. I guarantee you that the bill we've got before us, Bill 79 — actually, to show you how amazingly incompetent the government is, when the bill was introduced by the minister, and normally that's when they've just finished getting it ready, in his introductory speech he announced another amendment to the bill. It was breathtaking.

My point is, there have been seven property tax bills. There's mass confusion out there. Frankly, in most municipalities they are going to end up with not a tax policy, not a policy that has any basis in principle, but just simply, "Whatever you were paying last year, you will pay a percentage higher or a percentage lower." It has nothing to do with whether that's fair or equitable or whether you have been substantially underpaying or substantially overpaying. It's just a Band-Aid put on the issue. If there were any principle involved in it, then we could have a sensible, principled debate, but now it's simply a series of Band-Aids, all designed, I must say, to try and get the government through the election next year, in six or seven months, and then we'll pull the Band-Aid off and we'll see the substantial problems.

I want to go over a series of problems in Bill 79. One is that the way the bill is written, municipalities will be unable to send out their 1999 property tax bills until they go through all of these changes that the government is imposing on them. By the way, this bill will probably pass in two or three weeks. We'll be into December. They will have a few weeks before the end of the calendar year. But before they can send out any tax bills for 1999, they've got to deal with this mess created by the provincial government. I guarantee you there will be substantial cash-flow problems for our municipalities.

In addition, by the way, I might add that there is a substantial amount of extra cost that the province has cost our municipalities, everything from being months late on getting the assessment completed so that the tax bills went

out very late in Ontario — it cost municipalities about \$1 million a day in late payments going out, probably cost municipalities about \$100 million in extra interest costs as a result of the bungling of the province of Ontario.

Moving on to a small but significant point in the bill, the government of Ontario continues to impose its censorship on our municipalities. I have a lot of respect for our mayors and our councils and our regional chairs and our reeves and our wardens across the province. But the province says, "No, we are going to tell you exactly what you can or cannot say when you send your tax bills out." In Bill 79, the bill we're debating today, it says the Minister of Finance will prescribe the "information that must or that may be included on notices...and prohibiting other information from being included on the notice without the express authorization of the Minister of Finance."

The point I'm making is that for a government that purports to have confidence in locally duly elected councils to say, "Any notice you send out we will write for you, and if you want to change one word in it, you must get the express authority and permission of the Minister of Finance," is bizarre to me, bizarre.

On the third point, in terms of small business, I can guarantee you that if you go back and look at Hansard, the recording of the debates that take place around here, when Mr Eves came before our finance and economic committee with the first of the property tax bills — by the way, that was Bill 106. Then there was Bill 149, Bill 160, Bill 164. Then we head into another year: Bill 16, Bill 61, Bill 79.

But when he started, which was back, as I say, with Bill 106, if you were to check the debate that began then, we said — my colleague from Lake Nipigon made the same point — that the way this is structured is bound to increase taxes on small business. The reason for that is that something called the business occupancy tax, BOT, was eliminated. But the business occupancy tax tended to be paid at a much lower rate on small business than on large business. The analogy we used here in the city of Toronto was that each of the downtown bank towers will see their property taxes go down by \$5 million, and that's going to be picked up by — guess who? — small business. There's a temporary three-year cap on that now because small business, quite rightly, raised enough of a concern that the government was forced to react and the city of Toronto imposed that. But nothing is changed down the road.

It should have come as no surprise to the government that taxes were going up on small business, because you designed the bill to achieve that. As a matter of fact, there is strong indication that in terms of Bill 79, the bill we're dealing with today, rather than benefiting small business broadly there is the distinct possibility that it will hurt small business. As we've looked at this particular bill, we've found that for many small businesses expecting a decrease, they're not going to get the decrease now. I can't find it very quickly, Madam Speaker, but I'll return to that in a few moments. It has to do with many small businesses

expecting a decrease that now, I think, when the bill is finally passed, they won't see.

The fourth point I want to make on the bill has to do with appealing assessments. I think now there's probably about 600,000 people who have appealed their assessments across the province, and there is in this bill something that is of significant concern to me. It looks like the government's trying to sneak through a little change that will make it far more difficult for people to have an assessment appeal. Here's the language it uses. The Assessment Review Board Act is amended to permit the board to dismiss appeals that fail to "disclose any apparent statutory ground" for appeal. It looks to me like the government is using legalistic language to say to a bunch of people who have appealed their assessment, "Sorry, we've thrown you out because you didn't comply with the statutory requirements." I will raise that caution, because the people who are awaiting an opportunity for their appeals — I think this is a way that many of them are going to be thrown out.

While I'm on that point, in one of the very first amendments we proposed to the government, we said: "Listen, in 1998, when people get their assessment, they'll get a number. It says, 'Your property is valued at \$128,000.' They'll have no idea of what that impact will be on their taxes. You should give people a significant amount of time after they get their final tax bill to appeal their assessment."

I can remember the debate here. The government members said: "No, no, no. We're not going to do that. People will be given a certain amount of time after they get their assessment notice, not after they get their final tax bill." Well, guess what? We were right. The government finally recognized that they made a huge mistake here and this bill finally recognizes it and allows people to appeal up until December 31. That was something we proposed literally more than a year ago and finally the government has come to accept that recommendation.

1720

I want to say as well that much of this property tax bill gives the government an enormous amount of authority to set policy by what's called regulation. The public may wonder what that means. It means that rather than setting taxes here in the Legislature in a public debate, they're set down the hall in the cabinet room, by regulation. The public may be interested that today, in quite an amazing coincidence, we had the government introducing a brand-new tax bill. It was quite an interesting day, for us, at least. Premier Harris introduced, for the first time ever, something called the Estate Administration Tax Act. It is a brand-new tax, never before in the province of Ontario. It is designed to raise about a billion and a half dollars. By the way, it is retroactive to May 15, 1950. This is the Estate Administration Tax Act. The effect of this act is to impose a tax from May 15, 1950.

The reason Mike Harris was forced to bring in this tax — and it must be very embarrassing to have to bring in, for the first time ever, a brand-new tax, to not only have to

bring it in but to make it retroactive. I guess Mike was probably only three years old when this is retroactive to. Further, Mike Harris is implementing a Bob Rae policy that at the time Mike didn't much like. But we have this bill today, this piece of legislation called the Estate Administration Tax Act.

Why did it come in? It came in because probate fees or estate fees were being levied by regulation and the Supreme Court of Canada said that's a tax and that should be done in the Legislature as a tax act. It can't be done through regulation. It was a historic decision. As I say, here in the province of Ontario alone it's a \$1.5-billion decision, extremely important because the Supreme Court of Canada said people who are going to be taxed have a right for that decision to be made in public.

The reason it's important is that we have, on the property tax issue, Mike Harris setting property tax rates by regulation. That allows Mike Harris to set about \$5.5 billion of property taxes. We will never debate it here. We will not have a chance to say, "That's a sensible, reasonable rate," or it isn't.

As a matter of fact, for all the businesses in Ontario, as you listen to this debate about caps and what not, realize that 55% to 60% of your property tax bill goes to education. Take a look at it. Every business person, take a look at your property tax bill. Depending on the municipality, it's 55% to 60% going to education.

The point I'm making is that tax rate is set by Mike Harris in private by regulation. We'll never get a chance to debate it here. It will just be done through regulation and that's the way it's going to be done in the future.

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): Or until the courts rule on it.

Mr Phillips: My colleague said, "Until the courts rule on it," and that's true.

In my opinion, and we've made the point here in the Legislature, having faced the embarrassment of having to bring in a tax today retroactive to 1950 because the Supreme Court of Canada ruled you can't be setting taxes by regulation, surely a sensible government would have taken advantage of the opportunity to say, "This bill should require that annually, when we set the property tax rate for education, we will do it here in the Legislature; we won't do it by regulation."

I think they're making a huge mistake. We might as well send an invitation to the legal community to get to court, because, as I say, it's a \$1.5-billion revenue.

Mr Caplan: A lawyer's dream.

Mr Phillips: A lawyer's dream, as my colleague said.

First, as a matter of policy, I've always felt that no government should have the right to set property taxes, \$5.5 billion worth, without an incredibly huge debate here and without the public having an opportunity for some input into it.

As I say to my business friends, would you ever let your local council, behind closed doors, without ever telling you that they're going to do it — because the way the regulation works, no one knows it's being done. It's just done at a cabinet meeting and then published in

something called the Gazette, and that's the first time the public is aware of what they're doing.

The reason I dwell on that is just because of the coincidence that on the day we are beginning debate on the next property tax bill, when we have an opportunity to fix what I think is both a legal and a policy mistake, the government has refused to take advantage of that. I think this was the opportunity, and I can virtually guarantee this will end up in court and the courts will make their own decision on it. We have already this probate decision that has forced this government — and I think with a fair red face. I can't imagine anything quite as embarrassing to Mike Harris as, first, bringing in a new tax and, second, making it retroactive to 1950 — as someone said, the only things certain are taxes and death and Harris has combined both in this one bill — and having to implement a policy that he fundamentally disagreed with.

As I say, that is one of the missing elements in Bill 79 that, in my opinion, is a significant missed opportunity.

I think if you talk, as I do a fair bit, to the local councils and particularly, by the way, the senior financial officials at the municipal level — it after all is these people, our senior municipal finance people, who are put in the position of trying to implement this stuff. There's an organization called the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario.

Mr Caplan: Great group.

Mr Phillips: They are. They're all our senior municipal civil servants. They took the unprecedented step — they'd never done it before. They came down here to Queen's Park and had a press conference and begged the government on the last bill, I guess it was Bill 160 — no, it was probably Bill 16. It's tough to remember, there are so many of these bills. But they came down and said: "This thing is screwed up. You're making a big mistake."

Now we've got Bill 79 and there's been, to my knowledge, virtually no consultation with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and their senior staff or with the clerks and treasurers. It's stupid, frankly, to bring in tax policy and not pick the brains of the people who actually know how to make it work and are going to have to make it work. That's why you see around the province right now municipalities in a state of confusion, not because they're not competent and not because they don't understand these issues. Believe me, each successive bill has added to the complexity of the previous bill.

I gather there will be an opportunity with this Bill 79 to take it to committee. As a matter of fact, we're going to be forced to take it to committee because that's the only way the minister can implement the amendment he announced at the time he was introducing the bill. I think we'll hear there in some detail of the enormous problems created with this latest property tax bill.

Our municipal officials have pointed out that much of what's in this bill is retroactive. That is always difficult. All the municipalities have sent their property tax bills out and now people who had been expecting a tax decrease — and by the way, the way it was explained to the people getting a tax decrease was: "You've been overpaying all

these years. Finally you're going to get a fair bill." That's how it was positioned to them. Most of the business people I've talked to said, "Well, will I get some of my back taxes owing to me, then, if I've been overpaying all these years?" "No, we can't do that, but at least finally you're going to get a fair break." Now, of course, many of the municipalities are going to have to go back to them and say: "I'm sorry, we made a mistake. We want some of that back."

1730

Mr Gerretsen: Mike Harris made a mistake.

Mr Phillips: Mike Harris made a mistake.

As a matter of fact I've heard from some of the municipal officials that the reality is that under this bill small business may have to pay more taxes. Prior to Bill 79, small business experienced a decrease in property taxes by a significant rate. With the implementation of Bill 79, most small businesses will have to make up the tax-share difference.

Once again we're being asked to approve a bill — and by the way, I'm pleased to say that we voted against each of these property tax bills because of the mess it's created. I don't think it's reasonable to expect us to put our signature on something that we think is so fundamentally, constantly flawed. Certainly the senior municipal financial officials are telling us that this Bill 79 — and it was produced in some considerable haste, as we know. As I travelled around the province and talked to the mayors, the councils, the regional chairs and the Reeves and wardens, they told me that it's just compounding the confusion.

I want to just touch again on a couple of my significant concerns on this. There is a major concern on cash flow here, that municipalities have got to get their 1999 interim tax bills out, because they rely on that cash coming in to run the municipalities. There is a real, and I think legitimate, fear that by the time this bill gets passed — as I say, it has to go to committee, so it's going to take some time — it is going to substantially delay the ability of municipalities to send out their tax bills for 1999 and is going to cause more problems for municipalities.

I wish the government had listened to many of the amendments we proposed over the period of these bills. We proposed, as I said earlier, that the assessment appeal date be substantially later than it was. The government has finally recognized that.

We pointed out — actually, the day this bill was introduced in the Legislature, out in the hall — the problems of gross leases; that is, leases where the landlord was unable to pass on substantial tax increases. I can remember Mr Eves in the hall the day the bill was introduced saying, "Well, that's just a small number, and it won't be a problem." Of course, it turned into a huge problem.

We actually moved several motions, including something called a private member's resolution, asking the government to release impact studies so municipalities could understand the impact on their taxpayers of these property tax changes. That single thing, if the government had agreed to that, would have avoided an enormous

number of the problems we've had here. But Hansard will show that the government members all voted against doing that.

We proposed an amendment that said property tax rates should be set not through regulation but through legislation. To me, that's one of the fundamental flaws in these bills. I think it's frankly obscene that \$5.5 billion of taxes can be set not through any debate, not through any opportunity for the business community to come down and say, "No, if you set that rate, that's going to create an enormous problem for us," not through any opportunity for any of the opposition or, dare I say, any of the backbench members of the Conservatives to have any input into this thing. It's all done behind closed doors, down the hall, by regulation.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Since the member for Scarborough-Agincourt makes such eminent good sense, and hopefully with the idea of influencing the government members to come to their senses, I don't believe we have a quorum right now. There ought to be more members here to listen to this debate.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there's a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: In earlier debate on Bill 79, one of the government members made a point about how the government had made some decisions on what things would go on property taxes and what things should be handled by the province.

I just want to point out that Mr Harris personally appointed a 14-person Who Does What committee. They're all handpicked by him, headed up by David Crombie, a well-regarded individual. It was their job, this Who Does What committee, to determine what things should be put on property taxes and what things should be handled by the province. It's a worthwhile exercise to have a group like that of well-regarded people to make recommendations.

Here's what that panel said when the government finally made its recommendations. It said that if the province moves as it will, it will "undo much of the work accomplished by the disentangling proposals such as moving health and welfare back down to the property tax. The panel strongly opposes such a move. We are unanimous in the view that" there was a mistake.

The point I'm making is that I was surprised that one of the government members continued to say that the Who Does What panel recommendations were adopted by the government. In fact, they were ignored by the government. I remember it so clearly. Dave Crombie called a press conference. It was a press conference that the government only allowed him to have the day before New Year's. I can remember it very well. It was at 3:30 in the afternoon,

the day before New Year's. Crombie said, "Listen, Harris appointed us to do all this study and now he's completely ignoring it and putting things on the property tax, that" — to use their language — "the panel strongly opposes such a move...unanimous in the view" that it's a mistake.

The reason I raise that is that here we are now with the seventh property tax bill. I guarantee you that rather than simplifying things, it's adding confusion. Rather than getting at the problems of small business — for many of our small businesses it's going to have the opposite effect — it is another Band-Aid to a problem that should have been anticipated.

1740

The member for Huron, I think, said that her background is small business. My background is small business as well. You'd never run a business like this. You would never, ever fundamentally change something with no idea how it's going to end up. I guess I can understand one of the problems because I always carry this around with me. Mike Harris said he'd never support market value assessment.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: This is what you do in opposition. You carry these things around.

I'm just saying that Mike Harris said, "I'd never do it." Somebody said, "It's not market value; it's current value."

Let me tell you, Mr Baird, the member for Nepean, go look in the act. Look in the old act under "market value assessment," in the new act under "current value assessment"; they are word for word the same. They are identical. There's no word different other than "current" and "market." They are identical.

You may think that's going to be helpful to Al when he says, "I didn't introduce market value, I did current value," and you say, "Yes, but Al, the definitions are identical." "Well, yes, but I'm calling it something different." I don't think it's going to fly.

The reason I raise that is because one of the members earlier in the debate said, "Somebody has got to have the courage to do this." I remember the city of Toronto was moving on it, but Al, "No, no, I'll never support that." Actually, my friend Ms Bassett also has the same thing.

I happen to think market value assessment, of all the systems I've seen, is the best. Some of you members — you have your little briefing books on the Phillips file; pull it out — say, "You support market value." That's true, but I did it before the election and I did it after the election. But before the election Al said one thing and something different after the election.

I would have hoped Bill 79 would clarify things. Believe me, you're going to find that rather than it being helpful, it is adding to the confusion out there. We'll see that as the debate continues and as our senior financial officials have an opportunity to let us know how this thing is actually going to work in practice.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to join this debate and to make a comment with respect to one of the earlier interventions from the member for Huron.

She gave us a situation, an example, and I've got many in my own riding as well, where a commercial property taxpayer's taxes went up from \$12,000 to \$17,000. She stated that the assessment only went up 5% over what the assessment was previously and that the other 45% of the increase was due to some other factors.

The people of Ontario should clearly understand that the only rollback in this act is with respect to increases in assessments that are more than 10%. The example she gave, where an increase in assessment is only 5% and yet the property taxes went up from \$12,000 to \$17,000, that particular taxpayer, and I know there are many in this province, is not going to be helped one iota by this bill.

To somehow have the people of Ontario believe, if your taxes went up 50%, that this bill is going to roll it back down to a 10% increase is erroneous, it's not correct, it's wrong. This bill only deals with increases over 10% that are a result of assessment increases.

I've had this discussion with a number of small business owners in the Kingston area as well, who somehow feel that this bill is going to limit their increase to only 10% in those situations where the property taxes on their commercial properties increased by more than 10%. What I'm saying right here and now is that this is not the case. It is only in situations where the increases are a result of assessment increases.

The other point I wanted to make some reference to is this whole conspiracy theory that was mentioned by the member for Durham East earlier today. He somehow likes the people of Ontario to believe that the municipal councillors in the province of Ontario decided they were going to get even with Mike Harris and they were all going to increase the taxes in one given year. This is his terminology. He called it a conspiracy theory. The Treasurer himself admitted here one day that over two thirds of the municipalities in Ontario have increased their taxes this year by 5% or more. That was as a direct result of a question that was asked of him in this House. I would hope that the people of Ontario clearly know and get the idea, as a result of this debate, as a result of the comments that have been made in the media, that the property tax increases in the province by and large this year are not as a result of any actions by the local municipalities but are a result of the downloading that has taken place in this province, the downloading of services that the provincial government used to pay for that are now paid for by the local and municipal governments.

Isn't it strange that for the last four or five years, the tax increases in most municipalities in Ontario were minimal, if there were any at all. Many municipalities have had no increases at all. Yet the government would like the people of Ontario to believe that these municipalities all got together this year and decided to increase their taxes by at least 5% or more — because that's actually what happened across the province. I'm saying that's not so. It's directly as a result of what Mike Harris has done. Yes, Mike Harris has given an income tax cut to the people of Ontario, from which the well-off are basically going to benefit, and he has downloaded a whole

bunch of services on the local municipalities. That's why property taxes are increasing, and that's why the user fees are increasing in the local municipalities as well.

The other issue I wanted to address very briefly is this whole notion of market value assessment. The comment was made here earlier that that's the system we want for Ontario because it's a fair system. I don't think anybody ought to be under the impression that by implementing this bill and the previous bill, somehow there is going to be a pure market value system in Ontario. There is not. People have to understand that there are different tax ratios for different classes of properties. So if you own a multi-unit apartment building that has exactly the same value as a single-family home has, that multi-unit apartment building is going to pay much higher taxes, because the tax ratio that has been set for multi-unit dwellings is going to be much higher than it is for single-family residences.

There are, I believe, about eight to 10 different classes of properties, and if you include the subclasses under those properties, there are about 80 different ratios for different kinds of property out there. To leave the people of Ontario with the impression that if we implement this system, the market value assessment system, all the property taxpayers are going to be dealt with in exactly the same way in the province is simply not correct. It is a modified market value system being implemented, but it is surely not a pure market value system.

Another comment made earlier is that under the market value assessment system — I heard the member for Durham East mention this — homeowners are going to pay for the actual services they will be getting from their local municipalities. Nothing could be further from the truth under a market value system. If you own a house worth twice as much as your neighbour's house, under a market value system you're going to be paying twice the property taxes, yet you could be using far fewer municipal services than your neighbour. It is not a user-pay system where you pay for the actual services you get from a municipality but a system that is theoretically based on the market value of the various properties, so the comment made earlier was totally incorrect.

1750

Another interesting aspect is the lack of understanding of this bill, Bill 79, and the six other bills my colleague has already referred to. Nobody seems to know what's happening. In my own municipality our local council was involved in a heavy debate last Tuesday because the treasury department felt it was necessary to hire a consultant to work out the mess that the province has created here. It isn't because the person or his department weren't knowledgeable, but it is such a complicated system that has been created by this province that to call it anything like a market value system is absolutely absurd.

Obviously, the hope here — and you can hear it on a day-to-day basis; we've heard it here for the last six months or so — is that the province is trying to blame to the local councils. They're really the bad guys in this whole situation. They're the people to blame for any tax increases. We know differently here.

I just reread this note again, because I think we somehow got away from it. Under the old business occupancy tax, the larger property owners or occupiers, like banks and large retailers, were paying a much higher percent of business occupancy tax than the smaller businesses. By doing away with the business occupancy tax and going to this modified market value system that you're talking about, what in effect you have done is that you have taken, according to our calculations, at least \$300 million in property taxes across the province from the larger businesses out there and put them on the smaller businesses.

Don't take my word for it; talk to your association of clerks and treasurers, the professional civil servants in this province who deal with these problems on a day-to-day basis. Talk to them and you'll find out that what you have really done in this collection of bills is shift the tax burden from the larger retailers, the larger banks etc on to the smaller businesses clear across the province. How else do you explain the situation, as the member for Huron talked about earlier, where she had a business that went up 50% in taxes and yet the assessment only went up 5%? I'm sure she is not trying to suggest that the local council raised the taxes there 45%. The local council didn't raise the taxes by anything like 45%.

Another ingredient is how much the province is taking out of each municipality to fund the education taxes that they have taken off the property tax roll as far as residential buildings are concerned. In my own municipality, we've had people looking into that — we've had the clerks and treasurers looking into that — and they are convinced that what the province is charging back in education tax dollars to the local municipalities in our part of the province is more than the education tax dollars that used to be collected and charged by the local boards of education. I've had many situations where even residential property taxpayers, whose assessment went down and who were guaranteed an increase of no more than a 3% increase this year, for some reason end up with a tax bill that is 20% or 25% higher. One of the reasons may very well be the education tax ratios that are being charged back to the municipalities.

When you put all this together, you can well imagine how to the average taxpayer, whether they are residential, small business, even large business, it is almost an impossible situation to comprehend and to iron out and to determine who is really to blame here. The blame should squarely rest with the government that caused this chaos in the first place.

Why didn't they, a year and a half ago, when the association of clerks and treasurers and the organization that represents the CAOs and the city managers came to them and said: "Yes, maybe we want to do something about the system. It's going to take time to implement it. It's going to take time to get the right system going. Why don't we work with you?" — they even set up an expert panel to do that and, as far as I know, these people still

haven't been called in for any consultation. "Why don't you work with us so that we can come up with a system that is manageable?"

They didn't do that. The government knew better and they've created absolutely nothing but chaos. They didn't listen and their ultimate hope, of course, is that somehow the local councils will be blamed for tax increases because, after all, Mike Harris didn't increase the taxes. The local councils did it. That's the kind of propaganda that they hope to saddle the local councils with.

Look at the comments from some of the mayors that have been in the media just recently. We have the mayor of Niagara Falls saying: "If the government wants to help small business, this surely is not the way to go. They've created a real mess." How about in Sudbury where the council said: "This is the final straw. The introduction of this bill blows the provincial government's credibility right out of the water."

What people have to understand is that even if you're going to be one of the fortunate small businesses that's going to benefit from this 10% maximum increase due as a result of assessment changes, that money that is now lost to the local municipality that they would have gotten if the increase had been higher than 10%, if they had been allowed to implement the full total increase, that lack of money is going to be made up from the people who were the so-called winners before.

Can you imagine the position that you put a local tax collector in, a clerk-treasurer, when the commercial property owner receives that tax bill and let's say the person was paying \$5,000 before and now is going to be paying \$4,000. They're now going to get a bill sometime between now and the end of the year in which in effect the municipality's going to have to say: "I'm sorry. Because of the fact that we've got a limit on the increases of 10% to the people whose taxes went up as a result of assessment changes and increases, we can no longer get you to pay \$1,000 less than you paid before. You have to pay another \$500, so your taxes really didn't go down from \$5,000 to \$4,000, it's more like \$4,500." Can you imagine the chaos that has been created in the local municipalities as a result of that?

The other thing that the clerks and treasurers have to do, and I know we're getting close to 6 of the clock and I'll wind up with this final thought, is they have to determine how much of the tax increase is a result of the assessment changes as opposed to downloading changes. That, by itself, is going to be a tremendous and humongous task.

With that, I will leave it for today and hopefully revisit this issue when we next talk about it.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATUM

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Monday 23 November 1998

Lundi 23 novembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 November 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 novembre 1998

The House met at 1832.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PREVENTION OF UNIONIZATION ACT (ONTARIO WORKS), 1998

LOI DE 1998 VISANT À EMPÊCHER LA SYNDICALISATION (PROGRAMME ONTARIO AU TRAVAIL)

Mr Klees, on behalf of Mrs Ecker, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to Prevent Unionization with respect to Community Participation under the Ontario Works Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 22, Loi visant à empêcher la syndicalisation en ce qui concerne la participation communautaire visée par la Loi de 1997 sur le programme Ontario au travail.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I'm pleased to speak to this bill this evening. I would ask consent that I share my time with the members for Chatham-Kent and Kitchener.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Klees: The purpose of this legislation at the very outset I believe needs to be put front and centre as we approach this debate. Bill 22 provides that the Labour Relations Act, 1995, does not apply with respect to participation in community participation projects in Ontario Works. This legislation will prevent Ontario Works participants from using the Labour Relations Act, 1995, to unionize, bargain collectively or strike with respect to their participation in community participation activity under Ontario Works.

Let me be clear about the purpose and the scope of Bill 22. In reality, it has a very narrow and specific focus. It provides that the provisions of the Labour Relations Act, 1995, do not apply, but only with respect to participation in community participation activities under Ontario Works.

I know that in the course of discussions around this bill when we were in committee, there were those who objected to the concept that anyone in the province should be prevented from joining a union. That seemed to be a central objection to this bill. I made it very clear in the course of those committee hearings, as I have just

underscored now, that this does not prevent individuals in this province, whether they be on welfare or not, from joining a labour union. Individuals, whether they are involved in Ontario Works or not, still have the ability to join a union or any other organization that they so choose. The distinctive aspect of this legislation is that they are precluded from doing so with respect only to their participation in community participation under the Ontario Works program.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): On a point of order, Speaker: I apologize for interrupting. I'm not sure what the standing order is, but I'm sure there's an order that says at least one member of either of the opposition parties should be present before debate can occur. Since there are no members here —

The Acting Speaker: That actually isn't a point of order. There needs to be a quorum in the House, which is the responsibility of the government to keep. Member for York-Mackenzie.

Mr Klees: I am sure my colleague was only interested in ensuring that as many people and members of the House as possible have the opportunity to become more familiar with this bill so they can better understand not only the letter of this bill but the spirit, so I want to thank the member for his concern.

Getting back to this bill, in the course of our debates around this and during the course of the hearings, there were those who had expressed concern about this issue of individuals being able to join a union. As I said, that is not what this is about. It is all about addressing the issue of the community participation component of Ontario Works.

The Speaker will know that there are effectively three components to the Ontario Works program. One of those components is the community participation component. It is true that we believe as a government that it's appropriate and, when someone is on welfare, that it is in fact mandatory for individuals to sign a participation agreement and to become involved in one of the three aspects of Ontario Works.

Why do we feel it is important specifically as we refer to community participation that this piece of legislation, which precludes individuals from joining a union with respect to that voluntary role they then play in community participation — why is it necessary for us to come forward with this legislation today?

Across the province there have been initiatives by labour unions, by political action groups, to undermine the very credibility of the Ontario Works program, to make it difficult for people to participate in this most worthwhile

and most productive activity of volunteer activity with communities.

Individuals on welfare, we believe, would prefer not to be there. People end up on the welfare rolls in this province in large part for reasons beyond their control, whether that be the loss of a job, whether that be as a result of extended illness, whether that be as a result, in some cases, of a family breakdown. Whatever the cause may be, there are people in this province who are hurting, who need support, who deserve support, and we believe as a government that individuals who cannot help themselves deserve the assistance and the support of society. That's the reason we have a program in place in this province that provides a very strong safety net for individuals who cannot help themselves. However, we also believe that those people who are able-bodied, who have the ability to work, should do something in exchange for, in return for, in consideration of the support that society is giving them.

Many times, as I've travelled the province and spoken with individuals who are on social assistance, they tell me very clearly that they appreciate the opportunity to do something worthwhile in the community, to become involved in this voluntary activity. Whether it be in a nursing home, helping out in a hospital, helping out in a school, there are many voluntary activities that individuals become involved in in the course of their participation in community participation in Ontario Works where they have the ability not only to meet new people, to network, but to learn some skills, to know again what it's like to make a very solid and valuable contribution to their community.

1840

Why should we expose these people to the threat of an organization, whether it be a union or a political action group; why should we expose these people who want to participate in this community participation activity to those people who simply, perhaps because of a philosophical difference and a disagreement that this is an appropriate program — why should we allow these people to be robbed of the opportunity to have that community experience? We see, and many people across the province have experience, that that involvement in that program has been their first step back into a paying job.

We have examples across the province of individuals who for a period of time have been involved in this program of community participation and, as a result of meeting the employer, as a result of having the experience within that workplace, were actually offered full-time positions that didn't exist before in that organization. We have many examples of individuals who were involved in community participation and, through that, gained some new experience, perhaps a computer skill they didn't have before, perhaps an updating of some knowledge they didn't have before, an opportunity to develop some networks and make some contacts and, as a result of that, then were able to move into that next very important step in their lives of getting a paid job, of self-sufficiency. That is what this is all about. It's simply ensuring that we remove any potential barrier to individuals in our province

being able to make that important next step into self-sufficiency.

Speaker, why was welfare reform needed? You and other members in this House were here during a time when some 1.2 million people in this province found themselves relying on welfare benefits. That's one in 12 Ontarians. I'm sure, Speaker, you yourself found that unacceptable. Whatever the reasons might be why people ended up with that dependency, it was unacceptable, particularly in a province like Ontario, where we have all the opportunities to be self-sufficient. It was absolutely unacceptable that we should have the highest per capita rate of people relying on welfare in this province. Annual welfare costs in this province were up some 423% in just 10 years, up from \$1.3 billion in 1985 to \$6.8 billion in 1995. Surely there isn't anyone in this province or in this House who would accept that that is an appropriate level of dependency.

Why did this happen? I believe it happened in large part — and I won't lay all the blame there, because it's true that this province went through an economic downturn. Yet when we look very carefully, even in the late 1980s, at a time when the economy was booming in this province, the number of people who became dependent on welfare increased. There is something wrong with that when the economy is on an increase, when jobs are being created, when the economic environment is appropriate.

That was under the Liberal Party, 1985 to 1990. Speaker, you will remember that time well. I'm sure you sat in your seat over there as a member of the New Democratic Party and you were appalled. You must have been appalled when you saw the kind of governance, the kind of policies that were being introduced by the Liberal Party at that time, who now aspire to wanting to be the next government of Ontario. I believe the people of this province will remember all too well those four or five years under Liberal governance. They were a disaster for Ontario. I don't believe for one moment that the people of Ontario want to go back to that philosophy that, quite frankly, opened the door to this concept of entitlement. The values of the people of Ontario were starting to be eroded under a system of government that said to people: "You deserve to receive these benefits. The government owes this to you." Welfare no longer came to be known as a short-term support but actually started to become accepted as a way of life by all too many people.

We believe it was high time to turn that tide and to give welfare a new definition, and that definition is: the shortest route to a paying job. Society owes it to those people who cannot work, who cannot help themselves, whatever the reason may be, to give them the support they need on a temporary basis. But at the same time as providing financial assistance, that support should be giving people the strength, the ability, the confidence and the self-esteem to move back into the workforce so they can once again become self-sufficient and independent. Surely that's the best thing we can do for people in our province who are poor, for people in our province who are dependent. The welfare system is being returned to that

concept of short-term assistance for those people who cannot help themselves and a bridge back into the workforce. That's the objective of the Ontario Works program.

Speaker, you'll know that the most fundamental welfare reforms ever brought into this province were introduced by our government just this past year. Together with that came a very welcome reception, I believe, not only from those on welfare, who welcome the opportunity to transition back into the workforce, but it's my experience as I travel the province, as I speak with front-line workers who have chosen the career of social work, that they welcome the opportunity to now work under a system where they can help people develop programs, develop a long-term plan, that will actually see them transition back into the workforce, because the other two components of the Ontario Works program involve education. Under the employment support component, people can retrain; they can get their high school equivalency if that's what they need, additional computer skills.

The third component of Ontario Works is employment placement. Now that these people, as a result of their experience in community participation or their experience and their training in the employment support component, are employment-ready, the municipality will contract with an agency to actually help people find full-time employment.

So we see that there's a continuity of program, that there is an objective to the participation agreement that people sign when they become part and parcel of the Ontario Works program that moves them from where they are, dependent upon welfare benefits, to financial independence in actually working at a paying job.

I want to close my remarks by saying that no doubt we're going to hear some opposition to the legislation before us tonight. I do believe, though, if you listen very carefully, as I know you will, the opposition to the legislation will not be based on the facts of the legislation before you. That's why I wanted to be very careful to set out the purpose of this legislation, to articulate very clearly that the prevention of unionization applies only, very strictly, to those individuals who are involved in the Ontario Works program, and it applies only to their role in the community participation component of Ontario Works. So when you hear the objections, I believe it behooves all members of this House who will speak to it to be very clear and to be very honest with the facts of the legislation before us.

1850

We look forward to this legislation becoming law so we can continue to expand the program. Some 438,000 people have been involved in one of the three mandatory components of Ontario Works since its implementation.

Again, there will be those who will stand up and say, "Only a limited number of people are involved in community participation, so the program's a failure." How much of a failure can a program be that has moved some 350,000 people from the welfare rolls to independence? Anyone who would stand in their place and suggest that a program with those kinds of results is a failure really needs to assess their definition of failure.

We are very proud of the results of this program. We are most encouraged that some 350,000 people can today claim independence, who three and a half years ago were dependent on the welfare system in this province.

I know that all members of this House, especially the member from Welland, will welcome the fact that those on whose behalf he advocates — and he does so very effectively — the poor in our society, are given an opportunity to leave poverty behind and take on the challenge of a paying job.

Speaker, I trust that as you listen to the debate tonight, you also will recognize the wisdom of this government in bringing forward this legislation.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): It's a pleasure to follow my colleague, the member for York-Mackenzie, in adding a few comments about Bill 22.

Bill 22, as the member mentioned, is not a huge piece of legislation. It deals with a small component, and that is unionization as it relates to community placement. But I think it's wise that we talk more about the bigger issue, the safety net of workfare, welfare, whatever.

The member for York-Mackenzie talked about one in 12 Ontarians being trapped in welfare. In actual fact, it was substantially worse than that. It was actually 12%, which is one in eight people in the province trapped in our welfare system back in 1995. That was a welfare system that had become extremely generous in its payments relative to other constituencies in Canada, yet despite that, we had a situation where one out of every eight people in this province found themselves in that never-never land of welfare.

It would really be nice if we could finally move forward on this particular issue. Unfortunately, politics has clouded what should have been something that all members of this House should have come to grips with from the standpoint of, what is the compassionate thing to do for people who find themselves disadvantaged? Instead of that, the labour movement in its "wisdom" has chosen to ideologically fight this Conservative government on absolutely every issue, not the least of which has been the issue of work for welfare.

It's really interesting that the labour movement, which sets itself up as the great protector of the rights of the working man, would speak out of both sides of its mouth when it comes to the issue of workfare. While they tell the world how much the working man's lot has improved with them advocating on his behalf — and quite frankly, that is very true — they have taken this other group of people who are the most disadvantaged in our society and have used them as a political football for their own particular gain during the course of three and a half years of our government.

I think it's a travesty how Sid Ryan and his people have travelled the province threatening social services agencies that dare to give an opportunity to somebody who is on welfare and now are threatening a company such as Wal-Mart, saying, "We will shut you down if you dare entertain the prospect of helping somebody who is on welfare gain some experience and go on to a job." I don't

understand where Sid Ryan is coming from, where Mr Witherspoon in London is coming from. I have no idea how they believe they are speaking positively on behalf of some of our most disadvantaged citizens by doing everything they can to make sure that the idea of workfare does not take hold.

It's interesting to read through some of the various press that has appeared on this issue. I'd like to make reference to some of it, because there have been some very bold statements made by some people in various communities who had a very positive experience with this.

From the Kirkland Lake Northern Daily News the headline: "Workfare Working!"

It says: "Workfare has been a success story in this town since the first day it was introduced.

"Many community-minded organizations have benefited from the workforce provided by workfare participants, completing many projects which might not have been possible without workfare...."

"In addition, many of the individuals who have participated in workfare have been successful in finding jobs as a result of their work in the program...."

I really struggle to understand how anyone can argue with a program that accomplishes, on behalf of the community, work that would not have been completed otherwise because of a shortage of taxpayer dollars and leads to training and job opportunities for people who are disadvantaged. It absolutely amazes me that anyone could be opposed to that.

Moving from the north down to the eastern part of our province, from the Cornwall Standard-Freeholder: "Workfare Program is Proving its Worth."

"Workfare, much as the critics don't want to admit it, is working." Then it talks about those who are opposed to it. This is an interesting comment; those who are opposed to it, the Liberals and the New Democrats and the union movement. "These are the same people," this article states, "who during four years in power treated social assistance as a growth industry."

What a terrible legacy to have left our province, that after you are no longer in power, the comment is made that you treated social assistance as a growth industry.

It goes on to talk about workfare as another rung in the ladder out of the pit, that pit being the welfare pit.

A headline from the Orillia Packet and Times: "Workfare is Working." A headline from the St Catharines Standard: "Single Mother Lauds the Program." She says at the end, "If they have a chance to do it, do it. I feel much better about myself now," in reflecting upon her workfare placement.

In the Kitchener-Waterloo Record: "Two Men Celebrate Chance to Work." From the Chatham Daily News: "Welfare Overhaul Welcome."

It doesn't make any difference where we go in this province; we find every constituent, except organized labour and the Liberals and the New Democrats, in favour of the concept of assisting people who are trapped in the welfare system to gain some ability to improve their lot in life.

I understand where the New Democrats are coming from. The roots of the New Democratic Party are rooted in the trade union movement. Obviously, if the trade union movement says, "Here is the position we want you to take," the New Democratic Party is obligated to take that position. They tried to go against them at one point in their history, and that proved fatal for them.

The one that's really difficult to understand is the position of the Liberals.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): They don't have a position, do they?

1900

Mr Carroll: That's right. I've often said in this House that "Liberal position" is an oxymoron.

I hearken back to the red book. This was a famous document that was produced by the Liberals before the last election. In it, they talk about a thing they called "mandatory opportunity" or — I forget exactly what the terminology was. On page 16 it talks about people being given a chance, in relation to welfare. "However, when people who are able to work refuse to participate in any of these programs, they will receive only a basic allowance that reflects the national average and is less than the current allowance." The Liberals, as would be their position, were kind of, "Well, yeah, maybe, and maybe not." But now, of course, they're out there tying their horse to Sid Ryan and the organized labour leaders of our province in being opposed to work for welfare. I have no idea where that is coming from. However, most days we have no idea where the Liberals are coming from, because it seems to depend on what day it is.

There are some myths that surround the workfare program that I'd just like to make quick reference to. Our opponents say that Ontario Works blames the poor and victimizes people on welfare. I cannot imagine anybody who is on welfare ever being anything other than poor. I just cannot imagine how reliance on the welfare system can ever produce anything other than total poverty. The only way anyone, be it a single mom or a single male, can improve the quality of their life when they are currently trapped in the welfare system is to get a job. There's no other route. They could win a lottery, I suppose, but other than that, there's no other route. The work-for-welfare program is designed to assist in that process of getting people to full-time paid employment. What can possibly be anything other than positive about that, for people who are on welfare? We do not victimize anybody with the work-for-welfare system; it is an opportunity for people who have maybe been handed a tough time in their life to get some help to move on to a better quality of life.

Another thing our opponents would say, another one of the myths, is that participants have no employment protections. Madam Speaker, I'm sure you know, as do most of your colleagues, that nothing could be further from the truth. Health and safety protection under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act both apply to people on work-for-welfare. There's workplace insurance under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, or equivalent

accident insurance when WSIA does not apply. They have privacy protection. There are limits on participation — no more than 70 hours a month. There's pregnancy and parental leave. So they have all the protections that a normal person in a full-paid job would have.

The third myth: Ontario Works replaces real jobs, creates slave labour. This is one that Sid Ryan likes to champion most of all. If you read the legislation, it's very clear: Program rules specifically require that community placements not replace duties performed by a paid employee in the last two years.

The fourth claim that the opponents to work-for-welfare throw out: There's no child care or there's not enough child care. We understand that if we're going to ask a single mom or a single dad with some dependent children to participate in an opportunity to improve the quality of their life, somebody has to provide some assistance with child care. The work-for-welfare program does that. Ontario will spend \$699 million on child care this year, the highest commitment to child care in the history of our province. We've got a \$25-million program for the Learning, Earning and Parenting initiative, to provide child care subsidies and other supports so that single parents can finish school.

Unfortunately, the whole arena of work for welfare is clouded with so many myths and there is so much opposition engendered by organized labour that has nothing to do with the whole idea of assisting people in the transition from welfare to work. It has nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with party politics. Unfortunately, the trade union movement, with support from the two opposition parties in this House, have supported that whole concept of holding some of the most fragile people in our community hostage by not allowing the work-for-welfare project to move ahead.

Bill 22 is a very simple bill. All it refers to is that for the purposes of community placements under work for welfare, participants not be allowed to join a union. In the real sense of the word, they're not unionized workers. They're out getting training, participating in their community; they're doing some things to help them move to full-time paid employment. As I've said before in this House, I would urge Sid Ryan and the other labour leaders to allow and participate and co-operate with us, help us to help these people get trained so they can find full-time jobs, and in those full-time jobs, God bless Sid Ryan if he wants to unionize them at that point in time. He can increase his membership.

In the meantime, I urge him and his counterparts to assist the government, and I urge the Liberals and the New Democrats to assist us, in this program that is for the benefit of some of the most fragile people in our community, to allow them the opportunity to move from dependence on the welfare system to the wonderful opportunities of paid employment that will improve the quality of their life.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I am very pleased to take part in the discussion on Bill 22. I wonder if I might be permitted a little bit of flexibility here to go

back to the thinking behind welfare before we get to the workfare aspect.

You will recall that during the election campaign there was considerable debate about balancing the needs of the needy against being responsible in terms of our expenditures on behalf of the taxpayer. Even former Premier Bob Rae — you'll remember him — said recently: "The left has to admit that welfare dependency is a problem. The best anti-poverty that one can possibly have is work, a job." He came to realize this five years late, but nevertheless he did come to realize it.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Better late than never.

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, better late than never. That's right, I say to my colleague from — somebody took my sheet, Steve, and I can't remember your riding.

I would like to focus on some of the events behind welfare before the last election. I know of instances, and I know every member in this House knows of these instances, where young people who did not like the rules at home decided they were going to go "find" themselves. But they were doing that at taxpayers' expense; they were able to collect welfare. We know of instances where, because parents moved out of town, away from what was their traditional hanging-out places, they decided they didn't want to live with their parents any more; they were going to rent an apartment in "their" community, and of course they got welfare for that. We know of many, many instances where young women became pregnant not once, not twice, but repeatedly, and got more and more money from the government.

This is not balancing the needs of the needy against responsible expenditure of taxpayers' funds. There needed to be some changes there. As you'll recall, we made a reduction in the amount of money on welfare by 21.6%, but nevertheless we were still at least 10% over the average of the rest of the provinces in Canada. Then it became necessary to provide jobs for people who were trapped in the welfare system — and I do say "trapped". The reason they were trapped is because in many instances these people had no training and they were not being trained. That is entrapment.

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Workfare would provide them with some training or some education to go out and get a job. Bob Rae recognized this. The Liberals recognized it in the last election campaign. So we bring in workfare, and all of a sudden Sid Ryan and his ilk are opposed to it. They're determined to destroy workfare. Why are Sid Ryan and other members of his ilk determined to destroy workfare? We'll get to that in a minute. I will suggest that it was because of his own political objectives.

But Sid Ryan recognized that it is a success. He did recognize this. In Hamilton recently, he recognized that it was working and, believe it or not, he actually took some credit for its success in Hamilton. Where is Sid Ryan coming from? I'm not too sure because I don't believe he's too sure. He says that Ontario Works isn't working on the one hand; on the other hand, he says it is working.

OK, let's look at this. If it's not working, why would he be trying to unionize the participants? Why would he be wasting his time pursuing potential memberships if it's not a big enough group? I don't think Sid Ryan is that stupid. He says it's not working on one hand, but then in Hamilton he says, "Oh, but it is working and we are partly responsible for that success."

Now, Ryan could be talking from a truly altruistic position that he is concerned about helping out those who are often trapped. He could be, and pigs fly. I don't believe for one minute that Sid Ryan is interested in making it work. I don't believe for one minute that Sid Ryan cares about the people who are on workfare.

Mr Gilchrist: Not unless they get dues.

Mr Wettlaufer: Not unless they get dues.

I think Sid Ryan is concerned about one thing, and I saw this as far back as three years ago on finance committee hearings. He came in and he didn't care what it was; he was opposed to it because this government had proposed it. It hasn't mattered: Anything that we have proposed in three and a half years, he's been opposed to. Sid Ryan, Earl Manners, the same ilk — Earl Manners, the guy who wants to be the next leader of the NDP. All they care about is defeating this government. They don't care if something is good or bad or indifferent. They have one aim, and these are the people the member for Windsor-Sandwich wants to align herself with.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Pardon?

Mr Wettlaufer: I said they are the ones you want to align yourself with. You want to attack workfare too. You like to align yourself with them.

I was interested in reading an article recently by Christina Blizzard. You know Christina Blizzard, Madam Speaker. Christina Blizzard is a very fine columnist. I'd like to quote a little bit from her column. She said, "It's ironic that the people who purport to speak for the poor and downtrodden in society often end up most hurting those very people on the bottom rung of the economic ladder."

"Take, for example, a memo sent by Ontario CUPE president Sid Ryan to his membership in July...."

"Ryan said the provincial and federal governments are in negotiations on the devolution of the training portion of EI funding to the provinces. He says up to \$8.8 billion could be transferred to this province by the feds over the next 10 years." We don't know about that.

Ryan also says, "The government says it would subsidize the wages of workfare so that private companies would only have to pay them \$3 an hour." Well, come on. How ridiculous. We have wage laws in this province. There are minimum wage laws.

He says, "Community agencies are under immense pressure to participate in workfare."

Are they? I think the only immense pressure that community agencies are under is from Sid Ryan and the union bosses who are pressuring them not to take part: intimidation of United Way, intimidation of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. How terrible. Many of these agencies

were actually threatened by the union bosses with losing their funding, their contributions from union dues, if they took part in workfare.

In June, "Sid Ryan was quoted in the Hamilton Spectator, gushing over an Ontario Works program...." That was in June.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): Gushing?

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, he was gushing, the same guy who in Toronto a couple of weeks later said it's an abject failure: Sid Ryan. We're not sure about him, you know.

In 10 years of well-intentioned welfare, what happened to it? We went from 430,000 participants in welfare, or recipients of welfare, I should say, to 1.35 billion.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): That's 1.35 million.

Mr Wettlaufer: Million; I'm sorry. Thank you. From 435,000 recipients to 1.35 million. Think about that. That's over a 250% increase in welfare recipients, and in spite of that, we had a system that wasn't working. We had more and more people suffering from poverty. Now we've got a system in place that will give the people a little bit of pride and a little bit of experience.

I don't think I'm allowed to mention this individual's name, but in Kitchener it was recently reported about a young man who was a woodworker. He was out of work for many months and he finally got a job — under workfare, by the way. That's how he got the job. Five years on welfare, and I'm going to quote him. I'm not going to quote his name because I don't know if I'm permitted to, but he said: "One year pass and you don't find a job. Another year pass, you feel down. Like I had many time.... I thought I can kill myself. I don't want to live like this any more." So he was hired and he is succeeding. Workfare has helped him. It has helped many in communities all across this province. It is working.

Four hundred welfare recipients in Waterloo region, from where I come, have been placed in jobs through a workfare program called Ontario Works. In my little region of Waterloo region, workfare is working.

Why do the union leaders want to tamper with it? Why do they want to destroy it? They don't want these poor people to have pride, to have training, to have education?

I'm going to be very pleased to support this bill.

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Mr Gilchrist: I am pleased to add a few comments to the comments that have been made by my three colleagues so far. I'd like to focus on rebutting some of the criticisms we've heard so far since the bill was introduced and which I'm sure we will hear ad nauseam from the other side this evening.

Opponents of Ontario Works claim that it blames the poor, that it victimizes people who are on welfare. I don't think anything could be further from the truth. It was precisely the old system that was victimizing people who needed government assistance, because it gave them only neglect; it gave them no hope, it gave them no prospect of improving their lot in life.

One of the claims you will hear about this specific bill and about Ontario Works in general is that the participants in Ontario Works have no employment protections. Nothing could be further from the truth. Everyone on Ontario Works is protected under the same health and safety regulations, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act. They have workplace insurance under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act or equivalent insurance if the employer has a plan and WSIA does not apply.

They're protected by the same privacy laws the rest of the workers are.

There are limits to their workfare requirements. In fact, they can't be assigned more than 70 hours a month; not a week, but 70 hours a month. That allows, obviously, ample time for job search or any other activities they believe necessary to take them out of the circumstances they find themselves in and guarantee they are in a better position to find employment and to fend for themselves.

They're covered by all the relevant provisions for pregnancy and parental leave.

We've heard claims that Ontario Works creates slave labour and replaces legitimate, real jobs. Again, the only person who could make that insinuation would be someone who hasn't read the bill and its regulations. Program rules specifically require that anyone who is assigned to a community placement cannot be in one that replaces paid duties for an employee in the last two years.

Restriction on the hours also requires that the monthly benefit divided by the hours of participation equals at least the minimum wage plus 4% vacation pay. They are in every respect treated with the same dignity that all the other workers in the workplace are.

We've heard a claim that there is no child care or insufficient child care. Let's again put on the record the facts; not the rhetoric, the facts. This year Ontario will spend \$698.5 million on child care, the highest commitment to child care in Ontario's history. There are new resources to support participation by single parents in Ontario Works, \$25 million for the Learning, Earning and Parenting initiative to provide child care subsidies and other supports to help single parents finish high school, certainly the minimum requirement in an increasingly technologically driven society. I would hope everyone in this chamber would agree that these people should be at least equipped with those math and literacy skills that will allow them a fighting chance out in the workplace. There has been an increase in child care support for other parents in Ontario Works, from \$30 million to \$40 million this year alone.

There is no doubt that these facts show the claims of the critics of Ontario Works are false. The only reason for opposition to this program is ideology. The Liberals and the NDP have picked a fight with this government, as is their right to do. But, quite frankly, they should not be taking people on welfare and using them as their surrogate soldiers in that fight, making them pay the price for labour's political agenda as well as the political agenda of the two parties opposite.

Quite frankly, I found their tactics reprehensible: threatening the community agencies that are working with the government to ensure a better chance for people who have found themselves in a circumstance of requiring government assistance. What does this accomplish except to hurt the very agencies that are dedicated to helping the poor and to exploit the people who are trying to give a better break to the people who are on Ontario Works?

What the critics cannot deny is the obvious and documented success of Ontario Works. I know the other side gets very frustrated when we deal with facts. The facts are that more than 438,000 people have participated in one or more programs under Ontario Works. More than 340,000 people who were on government assistance on June 8, 1995, have now left government support, and that's increasing month by month. In fact, last month alone another 17,000 came off the welfare rolls, and the month before that it was 22,000. So the pace is continuing. We have the very real prospect of having the lowest unemployment rates, if the federal government can get their act together, and the lowest welfare rates we've ever seen in the very near future. Such is the health of the economy; such is the success of Ontario Works and the other changes we've made to the welfare system.

Two independent studies have shown that slightly over 60% of the people who have come off government assistance have gone right into the workforce. Those studies show an additional 11% have gone into training initiatives, and even more have gone back to school. The evidence is irrefutable: The overwhelming majority of people who have come off government assistance are in fact plugged back into either the workplace or the education system. The statistics prove that Ontario Works is working, that people on welfare want to work. They will work if they are given the opportunity, they are given the skills, they are given the chance.

Behind those numbers, of course, are the real stories, the stories of the families and the individuals who had nothing to look forward to day after day, who had been trapped in a system that paid them more to be on government assistance than to go and take a full-time minimum-wage job. What an incredible disincentive to individual initiative that must have been. You almost can't blame them, when the system was so corrupted under the previous government that there was no pressure for people to get back out into the workplace.

Instead of dealing with rhetoric and tired political arguments, I challenge the members opposite to talk to the people who are actually on Ontario Works, who are receiving the benefits I and my colleagues have talked about earlier. Those people support this program. They understand the benefits. They understand the better chance they are getting for themselves and for their families. Their families are stronger, communities have gained from the contributions that have been made in these community placements by the people on Ontario Works, and their children are proud that their parents are back working.

Ontario Works restores welfare to its original purpose: short-term help while people get back on their feet and

back into the labour force. It was never designed to be a lifestyle. It was always designed to be a short-term gap between the sort of high employment that we've taken as a right here in Ontario — because quite frankly we probably are the richest jurisdiction on the face of the earth. That's the legacy of this province. That's the thing people have a right to expect when they enter the workforce. Unfortunately, in the last decade before 1995 an awful lot had been corrupted, a lot of that sense of pride, that sense of certainty that if you took a few steps to better yourself, there was a job waiting for you out there in the workplace in Ontario.

Ontario Works restores accountability, restores responsibility to welfare. It offers opportunities for people on welfare to become self-reliant and self-sufficient. It gives people back their future by giving them the tools to change their lives.

Bill 22 confirms the determination of this government to prevent unions from hijacking welfare reform by exploiting people on welfare just to make a political point. If passed, this bill will ensure that people on welfare continue to benefit by having access to all the benefits of community placement. They'll be able to continue to benefit from all of our other welfare reforms as well.

This government has drawn a line. We will not give in to sabotage. We will not yield to the narrow political agenda of labour leaders who would exploit the needs of others for their own selfish purposes. We have come too far in transforming welfare into work for welfare to turn back now.

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Bill 22 protects the integrity of the government's necessary and successful welfare reforms. We will never return to the insanity of paying people to do nothing. We will not let labour leaders bomb the bridges we are building to opportunity and hope for these people.

If I can make one related point, as we approach this bill and all the bills that we've tabled in this Legislature, we do so with a very strong commitment to reaching out to all across this province and including people in debate on this topic, on all the topics. We've given more time to committee hearings, we've given more time to debate in this Legislature — per bill, we've given more time for consideration than either the Liberal or the NDP governments between 1985 and 1995. We have an abiding commitment, much as the other side would like to spin it and suggest otherwise. It makes good press; it makes great press to come out with inflammatory comments. But the bottom line is, this is a government that has proved with its actions that we are prepared to listen to the people of Ontario.

I have an abiding belief that over the next few months, maybe even as much as a year and a half, we'll get beyond the rhetoric, we'll get beyond the spin, and more and more Ontarians will come to know the facts: the facts about increased funding for all the programs that are important to them, the facts about a thriving workplace, the fact that we are leading the industrialized world in terms of increased GDP. There has never been a time in

the last 15 years when people in this province could genuinely look forward with the kind of hope and the kind of lofty expectations that they can right now.

This bill guarantees that for those who were marginalized, for those who were trapped in the welfare system, they can share in that hope. They will receive the supports and they will receive the benefits necessary to make sure they can compete in the years to come.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Pupatello: I'm going to be pleased to stand up and give my own debate on behalf of my party shortly. I just need to say that especially in the summary, the various members of the opposite party brought forward some claims, read newspaper articles, and I find that they are always, as usual, very selective. So I'm looking forward to the opportunity to bring forward the other side, the rest of the story, the things that the government doesn't want to talk about where workfare is concerned.

That the final member speaking should end on the kind of note that would suggest that most people think the programs of Ontario are being funded sufficiently is probably the biggest crock of the entire speech-making by all of the four MPPs who spoke on behalf of the government.

I come from the city of Windsor. I've spent a great deal of time looking at our hospital system. The one thing that matters most to people is healthy Ontarians and a system that helps people when they need help. This government has done more to ruin the hospital and health system in Ontario than any government in history.

We want to talk about children. This government makes wild, outlandish claims for what it does for children. The reality on the ground is that we have never seen such massive crisis at so many levels in so many agencies that deal with children. In this effort to supposedly streamline and find efficiencies, we in fact have ruined some very good, worthwhile programs. I look forward to getting into that further during my speech.

I must say that not one member even mentioned the sleeping beauty bill, which is the only reason we're here tonight: Bill 22, which is actually called the sleeping beauty bill —

Mr Gilchrist: Don't flatter yourself, Sandra.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, the member for Scarborough East.

Mrs Pupatello: — and not just by me, although I admit to having launched it, but by the rest of Ontario.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): This has to be the last straw. Bill 22 is a throwback to the 1800s in Britain when, simply put, people who sought to organize were seen as evil. They wanted to bridge the difference between the masters and the servants.

These people are demonizing the labour movement. Every second word from some of our colleagues is, "the union bosses." They buy into it with such zeal.

'Tis the season. They should start reading Dickens and we can talk about workhouses. The two or three things that are missing in the bill no doubt will come in the form of regulation. Wait for it; it's coming soon: 60 hours at a designated workplace will constitute a workweek. No

employee shall be remunerated at a rate of more than a buck an hour. Sixty hours a week, \$1 an hour, and no one younger than 12 years old — who says they don't have a heart? — will be allowed to push a coal car in the underground mines of Ontario.

Really, this is sad. This is a direct attack, this is a contempt for citizens, for those who are more vulnerable. It's the back of the hand. Then they have the audacity to say, "Yes, we will help the poor." This lot couldn't care less about the vulnerable, about the marginalized. They feed on them. Then they move up the food chain to the middle class and beyond. No one is immune, so beware. It's another bad bill. Thank heaven the New Democratic Party of Ontario will try to save the day like we've often done.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I just want to take a couple of minutes to compliment the members from this government who have spoken in support of this bill. This is a bill that I believe will affect, and has already affected, the people in the workplace in Ontario who are looking for a hand up, not a handout.

As the member from Chatham had indicated with the clipping he had from the *Packet* and *Times*, "Workfare is Working." It is having a tremendous effect in the county of Simcoe. This bill, as I've indicated before, has created at least 17 different agencies that have become involved in providing help to people who are looking for work, and not only looking for work, but looking for experience. That experience is so important to so many people today who have not had the opportunity.

There is a new centre at Tudhope Park in Orillia that is open for tourism. It was an old building but it was remodelled through the volunteer group that had wanted something to do. It was orchestrated by the social services department out of Midhurst, and those people had guidance to help those people. I was at the opening of that facility after it was completed. To see the work that had gone on there, the dedication of those people — those 11 people were there the day we had the opening, and they were so thankful when Minister Ecker had been there and indicated what she is doing across the province. It is a major thrust for people who really need a hand up, and it's giving them some experience. Experience is what so many people need today. To see those young people there working, they were really happy, and I was also.

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): I agree with the member who just finished making his comments, because this program has worked very well in my community as well. Indeed, there was one gentleman who picketed against some pickets who were opposed to the workfare program. He made headlines and got himself named in the budget as well for his activities because he believes in this program.

Ontario Works is up and running right now, and already more than 438,000 people have participated in one way or another in this program's activities. The Ontario Works program is indeed helping people. It's helping them to develop skills; it's helping them to become self-sufficient; it's helping them to contribute to the communities in which they live.

Since September 1995, there have been a total of 440,000 new jobs created in the province, and many of these jobs are now being occupied by people who formerly were collecting welfare. They would prefer to be working in the society. Over 340,000 people have stopped relying on welfare since this government was elected. In the month of October alone, some 17,000 people left the welfare system in Ontario, due in large part to the idea of an Ontario Works program.

I thank you very much for listening to my words tonight.

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The Acting Speaker: Member for York-Mackenzie, you may sum up.

Mr Klees: I appreciate the contribution to this debate by the member for Chatham-Kent and the member for Scarborough East, as well as the member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

As well, I want to reiterate that the standing committee on administration of justice travelled throughout the summer to the cities of Sudbury, Cornwall, Chatham and St Catharines to get public input on this bill. In the course of those hearings we also arranged for members of the committee to be able to go to community participation sites where we had an opportunity to speak personally with individuals who were actually participating in this most worthwhile experience. Regrettably, none of the members of the opposition who were attending at these committee hearings took up the opportunity to see at first hand how the program was working within the communities. Not one took advantage of the opportunity to interview these Ontario Works participants who were ready, willing and able to share their experience, good, bad or indifferent. In fact, the opportunity was there for us to see where the program needed some improvements, how the program was actually working.

I can report to this House that there wasn't one person whom we spoke to, either as a sponsor of the program or a participant in the program, who didn't say this was one of the best programs that has ever been introduced in Ontario to assist people on welfare to make the transition to a full-time paying job.

We thank all members for their participation and —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Your time is up. Further debate?

Mrs Pupatello: I am very pleased to enlighten members opposite. I know that some of you strictly go to your computer, likely pull off the speaking points that your party gives you, and then you come rushing into the House and read off a speaking point and probably fail to ask some very specific questions about workfare in Ontario. For the people who are watching this debate tonight, with all these glowing reports from all of the members opposite, why would we have anything to complain about, unless of course you weren't telling the entire story? That would seem reasonable. So I'm very happy to speak this evening and I hope I may share my time with an additional member of my caucus.

I wanted first to say that workfare and all of the publicity and marketing surrounding workfare is probably,

as one of the more significant pillars of the Conservative Party when it was elected and today, three and a half years later, the biggest hoax that has been perpetrated on the public. They have used all manner of things: money — taxpayers' money, not Conservative Party money — to propagate a belief that workfare actually exists in Ontario.

I would ask any member opposite to at least have the courage to stand up and say that what I am saying is in fact the truth. These numbers are irrefutable. Today in Ontario, 97% of all welfare recipients are in the same program that they have been in since the beginning.

Mr Gilchrist: The beginning of what?

Mrs Pupatello: The people will have changed, but the program is the same. That is the point.

Mr Gilchrist: The beginning of time or what?

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs Pupatello: All of a sudden this government gets elected and decides that they are going to change the nature —

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member referred to the beginning of time. I wonder if she could define that for us.

The Acting Speaker: Member for York-Mackenzie, you know that is not a point of order. Member for Windsor-Sandwich, continue.

Mrs Pupatello: Here's the point: If you go back to the Liberal government, the NDP government, the Bill Davis Conservative government before those two, there are people who are receiving assistance in the same manner as they received it then — not just some, but 97%. That is, 3% of those receiving assistance are in this so-called workfare.

Let's just talk about the 3%. Even if you could prove that those 3% were actually working in a program, I guess we'd have to relent and say, "I guess it's working."

Mr Gilchrist: You are wrong. There would have to be 10 million people on welfare —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Scarborough East, come to order.

Mrs Pupatello: But the truth of the matter is this: There is not a workfare program in Ontario that is what this government got elected to do. Let's be clear. Mike Harris traipsed around Ontario and said to people, "We will make them work for their benefits." Ladies and gentlemen, that is not what is happening today in any program anywhere in Ontario. For every single person who is now part of some so-called workfare program, it is done completely voluntarily.

On that note, I would answer the question from the member from Waterloo earlier when he said: "Why was Sid Ryan so helpful? Why was he so happy to talk about the success in the Hamilton region?" It's because the deal that was made is voluntary; it is not a mandatory participation program like this government wants the public to believe. That is the point. Those who were on committee with us know that full well, because it's the same committee that sat on the initial workfare bill the year before.

We must give some history. This was identified in the Toronto Sun article, not a paper that I quote all that often,

but in this case I certainly will. They refer to, "The Sleeping Beauty Bill Draws Fire." I have to do some explaining. Why the "sleeping beauty" bill? This Bill 142, the initial so-called workfare bill, was brought into committee and needed to be passed clause by clause. At committee, the majority of the members who sit on the committee are from the Conservative Party. That is the way it works. We were opposed to this whole Bill 142, the original workfare bill, as was the third party.

When we went to pass clause-by-clause — the majority of the members, being Conservative MPPs, voting in favour of each clause and we being opposed — they got to section 73 of that bill and we waited for what we knew would be yet another subsection that would pass because they have a majority of seats at that committee. And lo and behold, section 73 didn't pass because one of their members was asleep. When it came time to actually vote, one of the MPPs from the Conservative Party was asleep at committee and didn't raise his hand. When there was that pregnant pause in the room by the Chair to see if this was maybe an error and it was going to be rectified, still there was nothing. The member was out cold.

We wonder why since that time we had the reintroduction of a one-page bill. That one-page bill is simply a complete rewriting of section 73 from that first workfare bill. It has nothing to do with anything more. Rather than suffer the embarrassment of having everyone in the world know, which we hope would be the case, that it's just a sleeping beauty bill because one of their members fell asleep at committee and they need that section passed, they decided to send it back to the boys in the backroom of the party, try to refurbish it a bit and say: "How can we use this to best advantage? Why don't we go on a tour of Ontario to once again slam labour? Let's make it and call it an anti-union bill."

First of all, all of the members even today in the House spoke so far about how glowingly the public is responding to this and that the people who are in the program just love it. If it's working so well, what difference has this bill meant? Nothing, nada. It hasn't meant a thing. It's completely irrelevant, because the people who are in the workfare program today are involved in a voluntary program.

1950

I want the Conservative MPPs to go back home to your core supporters, the people who believed you when you told them in the 1995 election, "We're going to make those people work for their benefits." You remember that. That was you out there on the hustings during the last campaign. You said, "We're going to take those welfare people and make them work for their benefits." Today, three and a half years later, almost at the end of your term, that program still does not exist in Ontario. I want your own supporters to realize you haven't even managed to give them what they wanted Ontario to have. They wanted you to make them work for their benefits.

Instead, 3% — let's count it — of all those on welfare in Ontario today are in a voluntary program of their choosing that has something to do with training them for the workplace. Who among us would complain about that, if we talk about what it really is, a voluntary program

where they choose, where the agencies that are employed in putting these things together want to do it. It's voluntary. That has nothing to do with making them work for their benefits. Let's be clear here.

You decided to take this whole thing because now all of a sudden this is the party of social conscience; this is the party that wants to give people opportunity. That is laughable. Nobody elected you people to be the health people. You're not the health people; you're not the social conscience people. You are the tax people. Remember that? That's all you were about. Anything you had to do to implement that, that's what it would take. Now you want to try to disguise yourselves as some kind of conscience of Ontario taking care of those poor people with that patronistic kind of attitude in here. It is absolutely insufferable. No one out there who actually works with these people believes it.

Those members of the public who voted for you on workfare are going to know the truth: that today, three and a half years later, 3% of all those receiving social assistance, a mere 3%, are involved in a program that they've called workfare but that is completely voluntary. I say to Sid Ryan, "It's no wonder that you are pleased with the Hamilton scenario."

Let's talk about Durham, where the Minister of Community and Social Services comes from. She was begging those people to make some kind of deal so that there, in her own backyard, she could say somehow that workfare was working. Of course they struck a deal. The deal they struck was that it would be a voluntary program.

That's very different from what you campaigned on. I want you to go back to your convention and tell your own Conservatives the truth. Don't be all dissuaded, Conservatives out there who are going to listen to these MPPs. You ask them the tough questions: "Is it mandatory?" No. "How many people?" Three percent of all those receiving assistance are in this so-called workfare, which is voluntary. And you wonder why Sid Ryan was so pleased with the Hamilton deal. That's why.

For me to be in the House today as we summarize Bill 22 and we talk about what it really was about, a Conservative MPP who chose to fall asleep at committee so that one of the subsections of the original bill did not get to pass — let me quote a Conservative MPP who said, "For every hour we are in this House, that's \$100,000 of taxpayers' money." Do you know how much that catnap cost this House? Just in the initial readings, we were at \$700,000. Then about three weeks ago we had another couple of hours, so now we're up to \$900,000. So far with the clock, we're at almost two more hours; now we're at \$1.1 million.

Let's add into that all of the costs of committee, the joke of committee, that they would take a one-page bill, Bill 22, and actually tour Ontario in this facade of being interested in Bill 22. Please. You slept through the passage, you made it a whole bill, and then you sent it on to committee and gave it more committee time than the original Bill 142 got.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: In light of the member's concern about the cost of these pro-

ceedings, I wonder if I could ask for unanimous consent that the House pass this bill now, unanimously, and be done with this.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to pass the bill now? I heard a "no." Continue, please.

Mrs Pupatello: I find it very interesting that every time we start getting to the heart of the truth, these MPPs across the way decide to stand up and ask for a point of order just to try to get me off the pace. There is nothing that's going to happen in this House that'll get me off this pace, because the public deserves to know the truth.

Today we are at \$1.1 million of taxpayers' money on a bill that should never have happened in the first place. That is where we are at today. We didn't even count in how many tens of thousands of dollars we traipsed around Ontario. We rented a bus at one point, flew at another point and took a train at another point to talk to people as though these people honestly believed they were at real, bona fide public hearings. But even that was not the case.

Let me read from the people who were opposed. They're not just, as the members would say, the labour people, the opposition parties —

Mr Pouliot: On a point of order, Mr Chairman: I'd just like to respond early to the challenge. I don't wish the member to get off topic, but would you please check if we have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Are there two points there or just one?

Mr Pouliot: Quorum call.

The Deputy Speaker: There was something before the quorum call you're not interested in —

Mr Pouliot: I will withdraw my point of order, Mr Speaker. I speak quite fast. Will you please accept my apology.

Mrs Pupatello: Unlike what we heard earlier from a Conservative MPP, who said that the only people who were opposed were "unions and those opposition parties," let's talk to somebody who came to speak with us at committee in Cornwall. In fact, this person said she thought she was coming — listen to this: "When I was called to come — actually, the call was that I would come and answer some questions that people had on the placements we have made with workfare — I was very happy to be able to assist." She said, "But then I received a phone call and I was told that this was about Bill 22." She went on to say, "I hate to say this, but I'm very busy and I hadn't had a chance to be up on Bill 22...so I asked to have a copy of it...this was really a non-issue." That's what she said. That's not a labour person. That's not an opposition MPP. Those are people, real people out there in the field who would know better than any one of us in this House.

You know what she said in the end? "Where I was very sad is the fact that the biggest challenge we have when we're doing community work is to find funding and to find participation from people. What saddened me was the fact that I started to do a mental calculation of what this exercise is costing. Believe me, if I only had 20% of what this has cost the taxpayers to use in programs such as community gardens, youth centres, volunteer drivers —

because the job I have at the centre is as manager of volunteer resources. If I could have just had that, I could really go far this year."

This woman knew that she was called to speak to committee and that it wasn't even a bona fide public hearing. She was called by some government MPP who said, "Come on down here and boast about workfare." Did she confirm it as a voluntary program? Of course she did. She actually delivers the program. But I found it very interesting that you couldn't just leave it open to people to come and speak at committee as though it were a real public hearing. No, you had to try to go and saddle up your list with your pro-government talks, and even then you couldn't find people who could tell you anything but the truth.

Here's another woman. She hails from the Heart and Stroke Foundation from Cornwall. Unlike the Heart and Stroke Foundation, evidently, that the member was referring to earlier who was so angry, this person said outright, "This is not a program that is going to be of benefit for people." She said too, "Also, before I begin, I want to point out that I've experienced some confusion and perhaps frustration in the setting up of this meeting." So once again, here she was called to come and talk about the wonders of workfare, and when she realized that she was meant to speak to Bill 22, she thought, "What an unusual waste of money." In fact, here's what she told us about people on assistance who need help:

"What we have on welfare and what we experience" — this is someone who works on the front lines — "we have a fragile but growing work atmosphere that's more positive for employment. What we have on welfare and what we experience is people whose lives are just not going well. They have significant barriers that prevent them from being able to acquire and hold a job. They have things going on in their lives or things going on with their health or things going on with their families that are providing them with significant barriers. They haven't got training, and of course the access to adult education has been significantly affected lately, negatively, in that these people don't have as much access to adult education as they once did. It's not as available, it's not as easy for them to access."

2000

She went on to say that what she believed was needed was an integrated approach in the community. She said:

"They need easy and consistent access to mental health counselling, not just, 'If you're suicidal, we can probably get you in next week.' We need a health care approach here. They need counselling. We need a daycare approach that's consistent, available and high-quality. We need public transportation. It's well and good in the city centres to say, 'OK, you have to work,' but I come from a rural area. Believe me, it's a better place to live, at least in my opinion, but there is no public transportation. If they don't have a car, they might as well be on an arctic ice floe."

This, from a woman who's on the front line. This, from a person who's actually meting out the parts of workfare — not the parts that you want people to believe, not the

part that says, "We will make them work for their benefits"; the part that actually exists in Ontario today. It's voluntary. It's about agencies participating in a voluntary fashion that are going to make opportunities available for experiences for people on a voluntary basis. Moreover, 97% of all those who are welfare recipients in Ontario today are in the same program that existed under Bill Davis, never mind the Liberal or NDP government that followed, or even under King Harris, who got elected on the premise of workfare and has perpetrated the biggest hoax on the public in Ontario, because they actually think that workfare exists, and it does not. Workfare in Ontario today is a glorified voluntary program that you wish you had more of.

When we first came in to debate on workfare in general in this House, I remember in particular one Conservative MPP from Hamilton who stood up and said, "You know, all of a sudden we have a job board in Hamilton." The rest of us were sitting there thinking, "A job board?" Do you know how long they've had job boards at the welfare office? That's been around for years. Really, it is not just everything that you are given in your speaking notes at your Conservative Party office or inside your constituency office. There is more happening in the field that you just have not been aware of.

The issue with people on assistance has always been one of making jobs available for them to move from one to the other. It was always the case of people who had training needs, people who had language barriers, people who needed daycare, people who needed transportation to get to a job. There were people in Cornwall who told us clearly, "The biggest issue we have here is not having the jobs available." I want to say that this particular woman told us specifically, "Look, we don't have jobs, and I can tell you that these workfare placements are not going to lead to employment." She told us that. It's a wonderful opportunity that people have a volunteer placement, but you tell them that they're going to be there because it's going to get them a job, and the reality is that it isn't going to get them a job.

When people in North Bay first responded to workfare, they had people out painting park benches, but these were the people who used to be, admittedly, members of the union who worked for the city. Agreed. Those people had been laid off with your first round of cuts in 1995. So the truth was that those park benches wouldn't have been painted had it not been for these recipients, but let's call it what it is, folks. Let's say that it's a volunteer placement. Please don't perpetrate this kind of hoax on the public.

There were actually welfare recipients who made a point of going out to vote in the last election because by voting for Mike Harris they thought they were going to get a job. That's because they were told that if you were on assistance they were going to give you a job. It's just not fair to do that to people. You can't be that misleading in policy and in advertising and make people believe you're going to give them something you can't. Once you got elected, you decided to try to implement it, and the minister found one barrier after another, and you also

discovered that with people on assistance who need jobs, there are real issues that you need to address.

When you're in a single-industry community and something happens to that single industry, what on earth is workfare going to do to get that community back up and running unless there are people there who are prepared to hire them? That is the reality. There are people in my own community who have been laid off, who lost their jobs back when Windsor Bumper was operating and then was closed. The people in Windsor-Essex will remember Windsor Bumper. Some of those people, most of these individuals without an education, first came to this country with no language skills, no education, and went right into the factory. They had been there for decades. The last thing they needed was to have that factory closed, and when it did, there they were with a whole change of an industry, with computerization in the workforce, with new technology that they didn't understand because they didn't have the training. The best things we could do for them were to get them the training, to assist them with language training. Some of them still didn't speak English fluently enough to pass a test, so we weren't going to just all of a sudden realize, "We'll just get them another job." There were issues for these people that needed to be addressed. The shame of it is that in a market like ours, there are still those kinds of jobs, and when they're gone they won't be replaced with similar jobs.

I say to everybody here that there are issues of people on assistance. There needs to be a concerted effort to address the real reasons why people are on the system in the first place. When you realize why they're on, then you know how to work to get them off. This is not brain surgery here. The solutions are not easy but they can be simple. They can simply be a matter of daycare.

Today once again in this House we had a minister stand up and make an absolutely outlandish claim about the many new spaces available for daycare. Folks, the people who really need daycare, those same people who are on social assistance who need the daycare to get off, cannot afford the amount that they would pay for private daycare. What we're talking about is subsidized spaces. There has to be that availability for them. Are we suggesting that all of a sudden a single mother of three — well, forget the three kids at home, regardless of their age, and get the mother into the workforce. You just have to be realistic to understand that there's a daycare issue with many of our single parents on social assistance.

It is an absolute myth to hear some of the MPPs in this House talk about those stereotypes. The stereotypes that we heard in this House today are outdated and they're just dead wrong. You and I both know that all those inflated cases of fraud are exactly that. You have taken every opportunity to try to use fraud as another political angle. You had the nerve to come in and say that you were going to do better, that you were going to be unpoliticianlike. You weren't going to waste money on advertising that was sheer propaganda. So the other day arriving at every home in Ontario was another brochure, this one exclusively on workfare. Nowhere in this booklet does it say that this is a

completely voluntary program. It doesn't say anywhere on this thing that in fact 97% of all recipients are in the same old program that has always existed in Ontario.

Why didn't you tell the truth when you sent this to every household in Ontario? Why did the Conservative Party not pay the \$4 million for this piece of propaganda? That's all it is. Why on the document itself does the minister, Janet Ecker, say that you should be able to feel confident that the tax dollars are going to those most in need and not being abused? The very printing of this document is abusive. This document should have been paid for by the Conservative Party. Millions, instead, were spent to propagandize the notion that workfare exists in Ontario, and it does not, so let's be clear.

Of course we have an ideological difference of opinion in how you choose to deal with these people. My own gut reaction, I admit, my own opinion is that you'd just as soon sidebar this whole discussion. It's really not relevant, in your view, to why you're here. You're not the social assistance people. You're not the social conscience of Ontario. You're not the help people. You're not the school people. You're not the kids people. You're the tax people. That's what you said when you were out there. That's why people elected you. So don't come in here today, three and a half to four years later and pretend you've got some kind of social conscience for people on social assistance. You've decided to wait until the 11th hour, just before we're going into an election, and to put out propaganda. You could at least have the decency to have your Conservative Party pay for the damn thing. How many millions of dollars did you spend on this thing? That's what I want to know. Would it have been good money that could have been spent instead on the nutritional supplement aid that you cut to pregnant mothers? I think that's the case.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Is that in there?

Mrs Papatello: Lyn McLeod asks me if that's in the document; of course it isn't.

2010

Would people honestly have some problem with the idea that you promised workfare that you didn't deliver? Promises made, promises broken. When you delivered it, you even had the audacity to call it workfare, which it is not. Workfare in every other state — Republican — that's implemented workfare acknowledges they have had massive problems with SA. But it's not their concern. Those Republican groups weren't elected to be the social conscience either. They're tax people. You're not the health people; you're not the social conscience people; you're certainly not the health people where Windsorites are concerned.

You spent how much money on this document in full colour to tell people what amounts to inaccurate information? Nowhere in the document does it say that it's voluntary, which it is. Nowhere does it say that only 3% of all recipients are actually in this volunteer program, that 97% of all recipients are in the same program that existed during Bill Davis's time. That's what you should have told people. You have turned this into the biggest public relations marketing tool that I think Ontario has ever seen.

Is it fair for Ontarians to sit and listen that their own representatives, 82 of you in this House, will not tell the whole truth on an issue that is of such significance to the people who are affected? There were actually people in the last election who were on assistance who were thrilled because they thought there was a party paying attention to them and was going to get them a job, so they voted for Mike Harris. When the reality set in about what you've done, of course they were incensed. They were duped.

You attempt now to dupe the entire Ontario electorate. How long do you think this is going to go on for? The point is we're now at, easily, \$1.1 million of taxpayers' money on Bill 22 that you've cutely called the "anti-union bill." All it is is a subsection that you slept through the first time around, which is why it was dubbed the sleeping beauty bill. For heaven's sake, the committees are not that long; they're only about three hours in length. I admit it was a very long bill, but you get paid to at minimum stay awake. What did they say? It was a \$700,000 catnap. That's what they said at the time. At that time we had only spent seven hours of debate in the House. Seven times \$100,000 of taxpayers' money for every hour we are in this House was \$700,000. Now, given the time of almost two hours that we're at just tonight, we can add at minimum another \$400,000. We're at minimum \$1.1 million.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Sandra, you've got to have some fresh material. This is what you said half an hour ago. Let's hear something new.

Mrs Pupatello: The Attorney General wants to interrupt, but the truth of the matter is this is the gang that was complaining about all that government waste; this is the gang that said it was going to be different; this is the gang — your taxpayers federation people. You signed on the bottom line with the taxpayers federation. Why would the taxpayers federation ever agree to this kind of printing? Why? Why would you spend \$4 million putting out a propaganda piece? Do you know what we could do with \$4 million in this province, what we could have done for those kids who need the kind of attention that these days, these families deserve? You have selected instead, through community and social services, to spend \$4 million on propaganda, and your Conservative Party should pay the money back to the taxpayers. You said you were different. You said, "Oh, we're not like the other people, no, no, we're serious about this, about streamlining, efficiency." You're all about propaganda, that's all you are.

Here we have the text: "A Message from Premier Mike Harris." What it should have said: "97% of all people collecting social assistance are on the same program we had when Bill Davis was the Premier." It should also say in this booklet that the 3% in so-called workfare are in voluntarily, and that anywhere in Ontario where it currently exists today it is entirely voluntary.

All those Conservative Party supporters who at the time had those figments dancing around in their heads of people in orange coveralls, probably chained at the ankles,

dragging the broom behind them on the highway, because that was going to be Ontario workfare — it doesn't exist anywhere in Ontario.

When I think of all the money you've spent to propagate this, it is unbelievable to think that you may actually get away with it, that you may actually not implement workfare, because you can't, and then get credit for implementing workfare, even though you didn't, because people think you did. It would be funny if it weren't so serious.

We made a count of all these propaganda ads that you've done just recently. So far, your total is nearing \$44 million. The \$1.1 million on the sleeping beauty bill, Bill 22, is just a drop in the bucket compared to the propaganda ads. The only thing you forgot to put in your propaganda ads was, "PS, vote for Mike Harris," for heaven's sake. Your party ought to at least have the courage to refund the taxpayers of Ontario, but at this point we don't see any movement that way.

We're going to keep counting. We're going to continue to count all the propaganda ads, especially when you come from the Windsor area, especially when you realize what our hospital system is like, when you know you could sit in emergency for two or three days because no bed is available because you chose to pour your money into propaganda advertising instead of our nurses who could take care of patients in a bed. Our critical care unit is working at 95% instead of the traditional 75%, so when things go wrong — and you never know who might appear in the emergency room — we don't have the flexibility in our hospital system any more to have an appropriate bed for appropriate people when they need help.

Why has this party not shown that kind of interest in these real-life, life and death situations for people? I want to know why it is that a patient would actually stay longer in recovery because there is no critical care bed available to move them out of the operating room from recovery and into an appropriate bed. Why, on occasion, does a patient stay longer in a critical care bed, at a higher price, when there is no room for lower-level bed somewhere else in the system because you've cut that kind of money out of hospitals — \$44 million? Our Windsor hospitals have lost \$41 million alone, and what they could have done with that kind of money that could have meant the difference in how people are actually cared for.

That's my question, that you would instead come here today and talk about workfare, at an enormous cost to the taxpayer, about Bill 22, the sleeping beauty bill which isn't even required because you have self-admitted that you have workfare operating in Ontario today without Bill 22. So why do you need it? Only to further propagate the idea that workfare actually exists in Ontario, and we in this House know the truth. I would challenge anyone here to stand up and say: "We agree that 97% are on the old system. Only 3% are on so-called workfare and those 3% are voluntary."

The people we met with when we traipsed around, at enormous expense to the taxpayers, who could have been much better served in my Windsor hospital, for example,

or the Niagara general hospital, for that matter, or the hospitals in Sarnia where adults are now being moved into children's wards because they just don't have beds available any more — that money should have been used as a priority for people when they need it, but you choose to have us here tonight debating Bill 22, which is essentially irrelevant, just more propaganda for you to go forward and slam unions, slam labour, actually vilify individuals by name, which is completely inappropriate. Government members ought to know better.

Mr Gilchrist: I didn't name anybody.

Mrs Pupatello: Of course he named people. If he said "Sid Ryan" once, he said it a hundred times.

Mr Gilchrist: Oh, that name.

Mrs Pupatello: Oh, that name. I think it's about time you showed a little respect for people. Do you honestly think that just because they have an opposing point of view, they should somehow cease to exist? I have a continuous opposing view to the government, but that doesn't mean that I think you should just up and disappear. You do have a right to be there. I wish the government members would understand that just because people disagree with you doesn't mean we have to go away or that we should cease to exist. We do have a right to be here. All I can say to follow up with that is, pride before the fall, and I hope that arrogance will be seen by the people in those ridings when they are voting.

2020

I can tell you too that when we spoke to the people who came to us, who took the time — the Golden Horseshoe Social Action Committee, when we were in the Niagara region, took time to compare numbers with the Republican states, that when those welfare rolls dropped, the Wisconsin governor has been quite open in describing workfare as a deterrent, and that in fact every other place that brought this workfare in agreed, and at least they were open about it. They said, "Look, we're setting up obstacles and hurdles to stop people from getting into the system." That's what Bill 142 was about right here in Ontario. It wasn't about helping them; it was about keeping them out. I think the government figures if we don't know that they are there, then we're not obligated to help them, and you've set the hurdles enormously high for people to get into the system.

I'm very pleased to turn the floor over to my colleague from St Catharines, who will also be speaking about Bill 22, the Sleeping Beauty bill. I look forward to the vote, because this government should be on record. At minimum, you must tell the truth: Workfare does not exist anywhere in Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thought, Mr Speaker, as you probably did, that we'd be dealing tonight with some legislation which would prevent this government from closing Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines. I know several of the government members over there probably were wondering if it would do the same thing.

It seems to me this bill is the one that has that hostage in it about bank employees. Does it not have that in it? There is a hostage somewhere in this bill. I think the

member for York-Mackenzie will agree with me. There is a provision in it that deals with banks and bank employees or certain rights of bank employees, as I recall. We were wondering why it would be contained in this particular piece of legislation, because we know the banks are attempting to merge at this time and orchestrated a demonstration. I don't know whether it was on Bay Street, but I'm going to say it was on Bay Street anyway, where there was a large demonstration.

I'm sure in places like Monkton, Ontario, and Stratford and several of the municipalities —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Brunner, I think, is the pronunciation there. We didn't see them there because they're worried that this government, through this bill, although it's going to help out the banks in a certain way, is not going to help the banks out in another way. In other words, what we want in your town and my town and all towns

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You will agree that not only is the member on the wrong bill; he's in the wrong House. It's the federal House I believe that he would prefer to be in to speak about bank mergers. You will know that there is nothing in this bill about banks, so either we could order a transplant of the member or —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. That may be a point of order but it isn't the point of order that you would want to bring up at this time. The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. It mentions the Labour Relations Act. I know there was a provision in here — I remember the hostage. I remember somebody talking about the hostage at one time that was in this bill that related to banks. As I was trying to say, the employees of the banks in your part of the province and my part of the province — we understand that, Mr Speaker, that we have to have employees with jobs.

I'm wondering, when we look in the total context of jobs and workfare and so on, where the jobs are going to be for people in this province. We have a situation now where we have the corporate entity in some cases making unprecedented profits while at the same time the bodies are being fired out into the street. These are people who are being laid off. I don't understand the stock market that well, but it somehow causes a blip in the stock market, and the president of the corporation gets a bonus because they are even meaner and leaner as a result of trying to downsize the corporation.

Mr Gilchrist: Better for their shareholders. A radical concept, isn't it?

Mr Bradley: I don't mind. I've never found "profit" to be a bad word, because even at one of my favourite stores, Canadian Tire, I like to see them make profit and I like to see other businesses make profit. What I'm talking about, however, is a situation where we have corporations making unprecedented profits. Meanwhile, they keep sending people out the door: "downsizing," as they would say, or they would really prefer to say "rightsizing."

There are a lot of people who might be affected by workfare in this province who would like to have those

kinds of jobs. Those job opportunities aren't going to be there for people, particularly people who don't have the right connections. We don't have to worry over there because we know they have the right connections. I'm not speaking of you, Mr Speaker, of course, but I'm speaking of the government caucus at this time. They have people over there who have the right connections. They know people who can get the good jobs. Or the person may be fortunate enough to be able to afford a good education or the person may be brilliant academically and be able to obtain a good education that way. There are a number of people out there who haven't had that opportunity, and one has to ask, where are these people going to work if these companies keep downsizing while making unprecedented profits?

You and I understand, Mr Speaker, that if a corporate entity is losing money and either the service isn't being purchased or the products are not being purchased, then we all understand. We don't like it, but we understand that there are going to be layoffs. What ordinary people in Ontario don't understand is how these corporate entities can be making unprecedented profits while at the same time laying these people off and putting them out in the street.

I have a worry, when I look at the legislation in its broadest context this evening, that there are not going to be jobs for a lot of people that used to be there. They used to say: "That person doesn't want to work. There are all kinds of jobs." At one time there were a lot of jobs out there for even people who may not have had the opportunity to acquire a good education or a lot of specific skills. There were still job opportunities out there for those folks. Today, I wonder whether that's the case, whether really when you say, "Go and get a job," there is a job for people who haven't had those wonderful opportunities in life for a good education or good connections or some specialized training.

I know somewhere in this bill, because I remember people talking about the hostage in it, it made it easier for the banks to be able to do something in terms of their employees. I remember seeing that in a piece of legislation.

Another thing I'm worried about is that if people don't have these jobs — and we find out, if you look at all the studies, that a person's economic situation affects that person's health. If we have people who are not in a good economic situation — in other words, they don't have a job — they're going to need hospital care, and in our area, we're wondering where they'll get it.

You'd be interested to know this, Mr Speaker, because I know you've gone through the hospital circumstances in your area, some discussions that have taken place in your area about hospital funding and the keeping open of hospitals. I was at the Hotel Dieu Hospital at a meeting the other night, and while we were sitting in the meeting an announcement comes over the PA system that says, "This hospital is now on critical care bypass." That means you can't send an ambulance there with somebody who is seriously ill. You have to redirect it to some other hospital

in the Niagara region. Yet I hear crackpot realists out there saying: "Well, you know, we have to downsize our hospitals. We have to have fewer hospitals in our part of the province."

Just as in your area, I suspect, Mr Speaker, in our area we want to have available in our city two emergency wards so that people have access to either one. If one is full, if one can no longer receive patients, it's nice to know that you have a backup. As well as that, Hotel Dieu Hospital delivers oncology treatment; that is, chemotherapy treatment for people who are afflicted with cancer. That's something specialized and something that has been developed at the Hotel Dieu Hospital.

2030

Something else that is there — and again, we're seeing more of this now, largely because our population per capita is getting older. All of us now, for a variety of reasons, medical and otherwise, have a circumstance that allows us to grow older, where our target date, I would say — I don't know if "target date" is a good term. But the possibility of living now into our 80s is certainly not unusual, whereas it may have been a generation or two ago. That means we're going to have to have adequate health care, not only for chronic care.

We all understand that, that people who are somewhat older and may have a chronic affliction are going to require chronic care and home care. But also, the older we get, the more likely we are to need access to emergency care, or what we would call acute care, active treatment hospitals, in other words. It doesn't mean that older people are going to be in the hospital for a number of days, but it does mean that perhaps for a week or less they maybe have to go into the hospital for some emergency circumstance. So we must still have our hospitals for that purposes.

What we've got going on in our community, and I hope it's not going on in Perth county — I hope it isn't. What we've got going on now — and I'm biased, I guess, when I say it's because of the government policy — is that we've now got hospitals fighting one another. Why? Because the government says: "We've got to close the hospitals. We've got to withdraw the funding from the hospitals."

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for Scarborough East doesn't want to hear this.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Apart from insulting the people in my riding by suggesting that somehow East York has been absorbed into Scarborough, the member has got in his hits on the subject of the Hotel Dieu Hospital. He's done that before; he's had his chance again tonight. His colleague for Windsor-Sandwich did manage to confine her remarks to the subject matter of the bill before the House. I wonder if the member can be encouraged to do likewise from here on in to the end of his remarks.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order. I'll watch very carefully that the member does that.

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have to say this about this Speaker: He is very understanding of the wide parameters which are always present in debates in this House, particularly on second and third reading. In committee, I understand that we must be much more narrow.

I don't know what the member for Scarborough East is thinking now, because it sounds as though the member for York East felt insulted because I mentioned Scarborough East.

Mr Gilchrist: I think you insulted them because after three years you don't know the difference.

Mr Bradley: Both are fine parts of the province of Ontario; both those ridings are just excellent places. I really like the people in both those areas and I admire them. I certainly feel bad that after three years in the House I'm still not able to know which riding Mr Parker represents. I apologize for not knowing that it was York East, and I certainly make that reference to him now.

Now to go back to the Hotel Dieu, because we're talking here about people who need jobs. Their health care — you know this, Jack. The member for Chatham-Kent knows that their health care is influenced by their economic station in life.

Mr Carroll: It's one of the determinants.

Mr Bradley: It's one of the determinants; he mentions it quite appropriately. That's what I'm saying. If they don't have these jobs, or if they don't have a good job that they'd like to work at, they may need the services of the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines. That's what I am saying. I want to see that hospital saved.

It also adds kidney treatment. I met with Dr Broski the other day. Dr Broski is a young nephrologist, I think is the word they use, a kidney doctor, who noted in the commission report — this is the commission which was set up under Bill 26, which is the hospital restructuring commission, or the Health Services Restructuring Commission, they call it in Ontario; I call it the hospital closing commission, because that's what it has done so often, probably unfairly, to call it that.

Mr Gilchrist: And "restructuring" is too big a word.

Mr Bradley: The member says "restructuring" is too big a word. I'm just saying it's more accurate to say it's the hospital destruction commission, because that's what it seems to be doing around the province.

Anyway, they did an evaluation of the future needs for kidney care, kidney dialysis, in the Niagara region. Dr Broski, who is an expert and has people in his field who know this area well, says that the commission has grossly underestimated the amount of space that will be needed in the future for kidney dialysis and grossly underestimated the cost.

When I hear them say they want to move the whole Hotel Dieu Hospital down to the other end of the city and plunk it all at one site, at a cost, I might add, of at least \$23.5 million to the local people — not the provincial government; the local people — I become very concerned. That's why I've joined with some of my colleagues in the area in opposing the closing of the Hotel Dieu Hospital,

which I think has served us so well over the years. In the past, I've described it, perhaps in strong terms, as putting the boots to the religious hospitaliers of St Joseph, who've operated this hospital. But I look at all the services —

Mr Gilchrist: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Despite your edict to the member to stay on topic, standing order 23(b) specifically directs the member to talk about the bill before us here today. There is no reference to hospitals. I'd love to stand here and talk about all the things that have improved in the hospitals in Scarborough, but there is no relevance. Since this bill, and all bills, have a set amount of time to be debated, would you please direct the member to either speak to the bill, Bill 79, or sit down and let someone else talk to the bill who wants to.

Mrs Pupatello: It's Bill 22.

Mr Gilchrist: Sorry, Bill 22. Forgive me.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order. I'll direct the member for St Catharines to Bill 22. We'll look forward to his continuing debate.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much. I know it was Bill 22. I'm glad you said that. The member for Scarborough East thought it was Bill 79 we were on. I don't know which Legislature he's in. It just goes to show that sometimes members aren't always following the debate as closely as they might.

I can understand why the government gets edgy when I talk about the Hotel Dieu Hospital, because they well remember —

Mr Gilchrist: Come on, Mr Speaker. This is getting farcical.

Mr Bradley: I don't know why the member for Scarborough East is trying to intimidate the esteemed Speaker of this assembly. I trust his good judgment much more than I trust the impartial judgment of the member for Scarborough East.

I want to say that the people of St Catharines, who are interested in this bill, remember what the Premier had to say during the last election campaign. He had a lot of things to say, including — you know what he had to say: "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." I know why the member feels edgy and touchy about my mentioning that. I know that and I understand it. I feel bad about that. Nevertheless, it is the case.

I'm simply saying that people who do not have an opportunity to have a good job, who do not have an opportunity to have a job that allows them to get a decent wage and reasonable working conditions, tend to fall into ill health more than others. My friend from Chatham-Kent, as he was walking by, was assisting me in making that argument because he understands that.

Dr Fraser Mustard, a former dean of medicine and former president of McMaster University, said that on many occasions, that one of the determining factors of a person's health is that person's economic station in life. In other words, poor people tended — not always — to have more trouble with health than those people of wealth who were able to look after themselves in various ways. That's why I'm saying this bill may relegate some people into

that particular position of not having the wherewithal to be able to help themselves in terms of their medical future.

That's why I want to ensure that if they're in that circumstance, they have the general hospital, the Hotel Dieu Hospital and the Shaver Hospital in St Catharines. The Shaver Hospital, by the way, is for people needing chronic care and rehabilitative care. Everyone is asking that question. When they say, "What are they discussing in the House today?" I like to say that the Conservative members wanted me to talk about the need to keep the Hotel Dieu Hospital open.

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Mr Speaker, you will be interested in this, in case you ever encounter it. Have you seen the form that the hospital restructuring commission puts out for people to respond? You would have to be a downtown Toronto lawyer to be able to fill this out. You have to have so many copies; it has to be spaced a certain way. There have to be a dozen conditions on submissions that people have to make and it's a short period of time. It's now by the end of this week that they have to have their submissions in on the whole report and the response to the report of the hospital restructuring commission.

My friend from Welland-Thorold says that they obviously must not want to hear from the average person. Otherwise, they would first of all give more time to hear, and I hope that will happen. Second, they would make the requirements much less onerous on the average person who's had an experience in that wonderful hospital that we call the Hotel Dieu; or on people who want to indicate that they also want our other hospitals to stay open, because I'm equally supportive of the St Catharines General Hospital and the Shaver Hospital in our community.

As I look at Bill 22, I know it could have an impact on health care in this province, knowing as I do that a person's economic station in life is one of the determining factors of perhaps how long they will live, but certainly the quality of life as it relates to health care. That's why, if you were wondering why, I brought that point forward —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: That's why I did, and I know it irritates the member for Scarborough East, who is a chief government spokesperson on CBC television. It certainly does that because he speaks on behalf of the government all the time. I've got to give him his credit: He gives the party line every time, no variances. He's upfront, he's forward, he's a believer, he's committed and he gives that line.

I want to say to the member for Scarborough, at least I know where he's coming from. He doesn't try to vary from that idea, doesn't try to move away from his ideological bent. He is a person who will give the government line every time.

I want to compliment my colleague the member for Windsor-Sandwich. The member for Windsor-Sandwich is a member for whom I have the greatest respect, and she led off in the first part of the bill. I'm going to have to sit

down soon because I want to finish Buzz Hargrove's book, *Labour of Love*, which I wanted to advertise as being quite a good book, very revealing. I'm going to get Buzz, if he will, to autograph the book because it has so many interesting passages in it. I recommend it to my friends on the governing side.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Pouliot: I must share with you that I'm always, to say the least, appalled and surprised when the member for Windsor-Sandwich, with the commitment, with the passion of a world saviour — I would assume that her association with organized labour has been long-standing, that she's been on many picket lines supporting the brothers and sisters when they're involved in a lockout or a legal work stoppage.

My most distinguished friend from St Catharines, the House leader, never misses an opportunity to talk about Hotel Dieu Hospital. It has nothing to do with Bill 22, with respect, and I certainly appreciate the effort. But the member over the years has become insatiable. He must speak on every piece of legislation, and his caucus lets him. His caucus has little say. In fact, it's been said that the member for St Catharines, if it was decreed by the government of the day that we shall sit on Christmas Day, would say, "Let's go for two: Christmas Day and Boxing Day as well." This is his whole life.

Freedom of association: Whatever happened to it when we're presented with this dreadful intimidation? What happened to the right to go to collective bargaining? It's not mentioned there. What happened to the right to organize? This lot of 60 hours per week, I repeat, a buck an hour at your designated workplace, will help you. They are not friends of the workers. They never will be. They dislike workers and even more so they dislike the poor.

Mr Klees: I'd like to respond very briefly to the member for Windsor-Sandwich, who has great difficulty with the concept that the mandatory aspect of Ontario Works could possibly have individuals who are part of that program not needing to be forced to participate. The member is absolutely right that the vast majority of people who are involved in the mandatory Ontario Works program do not have to be forced to participate. As I have said on many occasions, people involved, whether it be community participation, employment support or employment placement, want to be there. That does not mean that the program has lost its mandatory nature at all. In fact, the record of our government and of our ministry will show that individuals are cut off welfare in various areas of this province for non-compliance with the mandatory nature of Ontario Works. There are many examples, unfortunately, of individuals who after having been given a number of opportunities, a number of alternative opportunities to participate in one of the three aspects of Ontario Works, refuse to do so for no reason and, based on that, forfeit their benefits. That's their right. Their right is to do that.

I say to the member opposite, this government has not compromised on the mandatory nature of Ontario Works. What has happened, however, is that the vast majority of

people in the program want to participate and don't need to be forced to do so.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the efforts that my colleagues have made to point out that Bill 22 is, as my colleague from Windsor-Sandwich said, the biggest hoax perpetrated on the people of Ontario. The only issue I would take with my esteemed colleagues is that I think it's a bit of a stretch to say that this is the biggest hoax among all the other hoaxes that are being perpetrated with \$45 million worth of advertising on the people of Ontario, and I appreciate the fact that my colleague from St Catharines has identified several other of the hoaxes that are being perpetrated.

I'm one of the people who perhaps most keenly remembers the advertising campaign in the last election, when it said over and over again night after night: "Mike Harris will bring in mandatory workfare; Lyn McLeod won't. Mike Harris will bring in mandatory workfare." I hear the member opposite say, "We haven't capitalized on the mandatory nature of workfare." Indeed, they have not. As my colleague says, there are only 3% of the people on social assistance who are on the workfare program and their participation, fortunately, is voluntary. This is another one of the promises that Mike Harris did not deliver. It may be one of the only bits of truth we've seen in Mike Harris advertising when they said that Lyn McLeod would not deliver mandatory workfare, because that was a program that we never would have delivered. So this is one promise that I'm glad the Mike Harris government was not able to keep.

I'm distressed about the other promises that weren't kept, like not cutting hospitals, which my colleague from St Catharines has pointed out again tonight was a major promise that wasn't kept, not closing hospitals. I'm distressed about the fact that they said they weren't going to hurt classroom education, and classroom education is in absolute chaos. But this promise they haven't been able to deliver, to bring in mandatory workfare, I'm glad they weren't able to do.

My real concern, though, is that there are not choice programs there for people. When it comes to education and training, there are no programs there at all. This is the government that wants to talk tonight about what it has done for social assistance recipients. They cut them off social assistance, if they wanted to go back to school, and forced them into debt on OSAP.

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Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got but two minutes now, but as soon as the member for St Catharines, Mr Bradley, is done with his two minutes in response, I'll have a whole hour.

I thought this bill had been dealt with months ago, years ago. It's been lingering around, hidden away. What a surprise. Bill 22, here it was, one page; it's a one-pager. They spent more time in committee on Bill 22, one page, than they did on all of their workfare legislation, and I'm going to explain why in just a couple of minutes, so hang in there.

I've got to tell you this, because I see the member for St Catharines. He made reference to Buzz Hargrove's book, *Labour of Love*. I actually bought it, read it and quite frankly enjoyed it and am pleased that Buzz wrote it. Mr Bradley, I hope not like some cheap shill on the Canadian Home Shopping Club — I hope he isn't going to reduce himself to some sort of ersatz Ivana Trump here in the provincial Legislature.

I have no doubt that he will refer to *Labour of Love* again, as he did earlier, but he may refer to another book currently out there on the shelves; I didn't buy it. I don't know, it's *Three something* — what? — who's on first?

Mr Bradley: For \$27.99.

Mr Kormos: I don't know what the other two questions are. Quite frankly, I think consumer protection should rear its head and prevent Mr Bradley from touting that little work of fancy, and people should wait until that *Three Questions* book is indeed on the remainder tables at Coles where it can be picked up for mere pocket change. Again, appreciate that I didn't buy it, but I leafed through it at the bookstand. It didn't take long. The footnotes are longer than the actual text. I don't know who ghost-wrote it, but that first-year university student should get top marks for a typical first-year university student essay.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Windsor-Sandwich has two minutes to respond.

Mrs Papatello: I need to say again to the members opposite that you must ask your Conservative Party to reimburse the taxpayers of Ontario \$44 million in propaganda ads, only one of which was this householder that was sent to all of Ontario that only propagandizes workfare, which doesn't even exist in Ontario.

You decided to take the sleeping beauty bill, Bill 22, called "sleeping beauty" because your Conservative MPP fell asleep at committee so that one of the paragraphs could not be passed by a Conservative majority on the committee. After that, \$1.1 million is the total count so far of taxpayers' money to talk about this bill in this House, and not one Conservative MPP would stand up and admit, maybe to their own Conservative supporters who wanted badly to have workfare in place here, that in fact 97% of all recipients currently are on the same program that always existed in Ontario, that the 3% who are involved in a separate and different program that this government has called "workfare" is in fact a voluntary program.

Those are the facts. They are irrefutable: those people we met while this government wasted money sending this bill around on committee, and we repeatedly called to stop the charade of hearings every day of the hearings, but to no avail. We said: "Cancel it. Stop this charade. Stop wasting taxpayers' money so that this government can go forward and blast the unions and blast labour once again, because you find them to be an enemy of the state."

We don't agree with what this government is doing. We know that those who must implement this will find their own way around it, and indeed they have.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Kormos: I'm going to open by mentioning to you, as I do oftentimes, that I can't for the life of me think of

what I'm going to say about this bill over the course of a whole hour. I couldn't begin to imagine. I've got an hour. It's called a leadoff speech. It's the maximum period of time you can speak in the assembly nowadays. After the Tories changed the rules, it's the maximum period of time you can speak for, because you do the leadoff speech for an hour and then subsequent speakers — I think Mr Christopherson, our labour critic, certainly wants to speak to this; Mr Pouliot wants to speak to it; Ms Boyd wants to speak to it — all they're going to get is a mere 20 minutes per person to speak to this bill. People remaining will have but 10 minutes to speak to it.

When I responded to the member for St Catharines — because from the first notification, remember, we were going to talk about Bill 25 tonight. That was the first thing that appeared. That's an interesting one. Bill 25 I'm looking forward to, especially schedules C and J. Listen, people, I wish that the government members would pay close attention.

I should tell you as well, though, that down in the constituency office today the phone has been ringing off the hook because this morning's local newspapers, the Welland Tribune and the St Catharines Standard, both owned by Conrad Black, close associate of the member for St Catharines — the member for St Catharines speaks of Conrad Black often. He and I have been in venues where he's spoken to the press about Conrad Black — in language that is somewhat unfamiliar to me, but I trust it's complimentary — but somehow it never gets reported. There's a gremlin at the Standard that deletes those references that people in the public are inclined to make about Conrad Black.

In any event what happened is that — I don't want to prejudge a criminal investigation and what may well result in a trial — there have been a number of charges laid involving, literally, a used car dealer who is alleged, according to the newspaper reports, to have been peddling stolen iron, stolen cars. What's been happening, according to the press reports and the calls we've been getting at our constit office today — I suspect these calls are going to occur all over Niagara region because it's going to spread throughout the region and it'll involve more than a few vehicles — is that the vehicles that have been purchased are, as I say, allegedly stolen, which means they don't belong to the people who bought them.

We're not talking about little \$500 push-it-off-the-lot junkers. We're talking about quite a few thousands of dollars that families are investing in these used vehicles. The police have seized a number. The press reports indicate that they're going to seize a number more, because what happens is that folks have been buying, literally, stolen vehicles, according to the investigation. If they were stolen vehicles, they don't belong to the people who bought them. That's the reality of the law. You can't buy something that wasn't the vendor's to sell, because it didn't belong to the guy who sold it to you. Apparently most of them, the title to them, the property in them, is with the insurance company that paid out to the owner from whom they were stolen.

Mr Bradley: Who's watching over all this?

Mr Kormos: Exactly the point. You're talking about people who have indicated being out \$10,000, \$12,000 or \$15,000 at a shot, down in Niagara region, one of the places that's been hardest hit by this government's policies. It has persistently high levels of unemployment, even higher among young people. People have been whacked. People have been hit hard by — well, let's face it. At the end of the day we expect to be — the number of stolen vehicles that have been purchased with good, hard-earned money, many times borrowed money. You see, the lender doesn't care about the status of the vehicle.

People have been calling my constituency office. My staff, both down in Welland-Thorold and here at Queen's Park, got to work early. We pulled the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act today and of course, as you know, the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act — I got the office consolidation. I'm hoping it hasn't been revoked by some red tape commission.

Mr Bradley: Is somebody writing letters?

Mr Kormos: It makes me nervous. Is somebody going to suggest that a prosecution not take place here? Is some government backbencher going to prevail upon a minister, saying, "Don't prosecute these people, it's more red tape," to protect the public and to protect consumers?

We pulled the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, and of course it makes reference to the regulation-making power. Regulation 801 provides for the compensation fund. The problem is this: Our reading, and we called — have you ever tried to call the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations? Let me tell you, what happened is I've got a case down in London, Ontario. What happened is a fellow got his car towed — it was one of those Jimmy 4x4s — by a rather notorious towing company in London. They scooped the car off of private property.

You know the case law in that regard. It can't be done, right? The cases, as a matter of fact, all emanate out of London, Ontario, and have gone to the Court of Appeal. You can't scoop vehicles off of private property and then hold the owner of the vehicle liable. You could well have the owner of the property who turned in the vehicle charged back for the tow. Unlike where the police write you up and call the tow truck and authorize its removal because of a violation of a municipal bylaw or the HTA, the Highway Traffic Act, you can't, by and large, tow off of private property and make the owner of the vehicle liable. There have been a number of law suits, litigation, about that, dealt with all the way to the Court of Appeal here in Ontario.

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Anyway, this fellow gets his car towed. It ends up disappearing in the bowels of the tow truck company, and before you know it, the guy doesn't own a vehicle. It's been rolled over through two corporations within this tow truck operator, which also runs a service dealership, and then sold to yet another party.

Mr Bradley: Who's watching all this?

Mr Kormos: Wait, I'm going to get to the point here in just a second. Just hang on.

Mr Bradley: Is the fox in charge of the henhouse?

Mr Kormos: Speaker, please. I want you to hear this. You've got a consumer here, a little person. All he knows is that he doesn't have a Jimmy any more, it isn't in the compound any more. First he's told he owed storage fees and towing fees, and then he's told, "We sold it under" — what is it they say? — "a warehouseman's lien." That used to be the old terminology. So this young fellow initiated a Small Claims Court action against this company —

Ms Mushinski: That actually started under your government.

Mr Kormos: Oh no, this happened well during this government's tenure.

I said, "Let me see what I can do." So I drove down to London and I drove over to this operation, because I'm checking it out, OK? This is something out of a Burt Reynolds movie: the bays and the big compound yard at the back. I take a look and I see that there's no compliance with the legislation that requires notice being posted in the shop of hourly rates — it's compulsory — of the right to have your used parts returned, no compliance with the Motor Vehicle Repair Act. I took a look at the statute. I said: "By God, this operation is as dirty as they get. They're breaking the law left and right."

Here's where we get to the point. I called the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, phoned them from here in Toronto. I wanted to turn these actors in. I wanted them busted. I wanted due process to take place. I wanted the ministry to deploy one of its investigators and see what I saw and lay charges and let the courts deal with it. I got on the phone to the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. It took several efforts to get the ringing to stop, and when there was an answer it was voice mail. I pressed "1" and it was more voice mail; I pressed "2" and it was more voice mail; I pressed "3" and it was more voice mail. I'm getting frustrated. I'm getting a little irate. What if this were an emergency? Think about it. What if it were an emergency? What if the offence were occurring right then and there? I finally got hold of a supervisor, by calling a deputy minister and an assistant deputy minister and a bureaucrat here and a bureaucrat there.

Ms Mushinski: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: While I recognize that the speaker from I believe Welland-Thorold is actually telling a very interesting story about Jimmys — I'm not quite sure which Jimmy he's talking about — but my point of order is that I'm not sure that what he's talking about has anything to do with workfare and unionization. I'd appreciate your ruling on that, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: It is a point of order, and I'll just remind the member for Welland-Thorold that we're on Bill 22.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, to Ms Mushinski. I am grateful to her for bringing me back to the initial point. Ms Mushinski, I appreciate that this is a taxing exercise for you, to monitor the commentator, to make sure people are on point. Please, I really want to apologize to Ms Mushinski. I want to express my heartfelt and sincere

regrets, because she's right. I digressed. I don't know what took hold of me. I can't for the life of me begin to think why it was, when I started with Bill 22, I mentioned the incredible lapse of time from when we had second reading and committee. I was on committee. Did I mention, Ms Mushinski, that we spent more time in committee on this one-page Bill 22 than we did on the whole workfare legislation? Did I mention that already?

Ms Mushinski: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe it is a common courtesy in this House to refer to members by their riding name rather than their personal name, as I did to the member for Welland-Thorold.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order. I would remind the member for Welland-Thorold that I would like comments directed through me. It is a custom of which you sure ought to be aware that we refer to other members by their ridings.

Mr Kormos: Once again, Speaker, I apologize. The problem is, I can't for the life of me, even after three years, recall which riding she represents.

Mr Gilchrist: Scarborough Centre.

Mr Kormos: OK. To the member for Scarborough Centre —

Mr Bradley: Who is Scarborough-Ellesmere then?

Mr Kormos: Well, wait a minute. Is Scarborough Centre the riding that Jim Brown is going to contest? I understand a deal was struck, because Mr Brown, who represents a Scarborough riding, was going to run against Mr Newman. They took our schematics.

I apologize to this member from Scarborough because she's right, I referred to her by her name. I called her Ms Mushinski, and for that I apologize. I express my sincere regrets to you, to your family, to your neighbours, to anybody who has ever met you, to people who know you as their MPP, to people who've met you and wish they hadn't. I express my apologies, and I express my gratitude to you, Speaker, for coming to the assistance of the member and drawing my attention to the fact that it's just plain wrong to refer to a member by her name.

But it was wrong for those people to steal that young man's car, his four-wheel-drive truck, his Jimmy, his GMC. It was wrong for them to do that. It was wrong for me to refer to the member by her name; it was wrong for those people in London to steal that truck. The only recourse I had on his behalf was to contact the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, and it was wrong for them to have gutted their ministry to the point where investigators simply aren't available for aggrieved consumers. It was wrong for this government to gut the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations to the extent that consumer protection doesn't exist in this province any more. That's wrong too. That is as wrong as it was for me to refer to the member by her name.

In fact, when I refer to the member by her name, an apology will suffice to remedy it. For this young person from London, Ontario, an apology from the ministry isn't going to restore to him the vehicle stolen from him by an unscrupulous tower and auto repair dealer.

Ms Mushinski: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: A few moments ago I rose on a point of order asking the member for Welland-Thorold to get back to the issue at hand, and I do not believe that has occurred since my last point of order. I would ask you to bring him back to the issue at hand, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order. I would direct a comment or two to the member for Welland-Thorold if I could, and that is, I am becoming a little bit confused about Jimmy. I want to know if Jimmy is on workfare and covered under Bill 22 or not. I would ask you to address your comments and debate to the bill that's in front of us.

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Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker.

Let me tell you, this young man whose Jimmy was stolen from him by the tow truck operator is going to be on welfare and forced to submit to workfare if he is inadequately compensated for being victimized by an unscrupulous tow truck repair operator. That member over there who keeps rising on points of order should know what's out of order here. I'm talking about a victim of this government's abdication of its responsibility to provide consumer protection and to provide the services that any fair-minded person would relate to consumer protection.

I told you it was going to be tough to stay on point with Bill 22 because (1) it's been so long, (2) it's but one page and (3) we spent more time in committee on Bill 22 than we did on all of the workfare bill itself. Why should I repeat what other people said? I don't want to repeat what members from the official opposition said; they've already said certain things about Bill 22.

I'm a little preoccupied with the phone calls we've had today from similar victims. I called the two police officers working on it, Jeff Skelton and Dave Shannon down in number 3 division in Welland. I left a call for them, got a call back later today, wasn't able to answer that call. I had a concern that some of these people who have been ripped off may be on social assistance. Some of them may be on this government's workfare programs; some of them just might be.

Here, when we are addressing Bill 22 — the member from Scarborough somewhere will know this — and reflecting on what it means to be on this government's workfare, we can't help but think of the injustice that's being imposed on those people who are out of pocket, who may still owe the finance company or the bank or the credit union, and whose vehicle was picked up because, quite frankly, it doesn't belong to them, it was stolen.

What we've done is get hold of the compensation fund, confirm that it appears it's still in existence. Their office has been dispensing the information that people who have been victimized should be getting hold of their MPP's constituency office; they should be getting the appropriate application forms from the compensation fund.

Unfortunately, first there's a \$15,000 cap that appears, according to regulation 801, on the amount of monies that can be paid out. That means if you're owed \$18,000 or \$19,000, you're out the difference between 15 grand and

18 or 19. Second, one had to either initiate civil action — and obviously the jurisdiction of Small Claims Court is what, \$6,000? If you want to go beyond \$6,000, that means you've got to get into more expensive courts, the old county courts; or one can rely upon a criminal conviction, as long as the circumstances of the conviction make your case. That means there's going to have to be some communication between these victims and the investigating Niagara Regional Police and the crown attorney's office that eventually engages in a prosecution with a view to getting a conviction.

My concern — and I'm concerned about Bill 22 as well, but that concern has to be accompanied by my concern for the victims of this stolen car scam, this scheme operating down in Niagara region — is the incredible period of time that's going to transpire between when these people don't have a vehicle — let's face it, if you live down in Niagara, you don't have strong public transit from city to city, even within the community in some cases, all the more so now, and a vehicle can be a fact of life, a necessity for getting to and from work, if there is work. Lord knows, work has been hard to come by in Niagara region. Unemployment levels remain high.

Mr Gilchrist: It's 4.9%.

Mr Kormos: Well, unemployment levels in Niagara region have remained higher than they have in most of the province.

Mr Gilchrist: Oh, 4.9%.

Mr Kormos: And among young people twice that much.

Ms Mushinski: That's stretching it.

Mr Kormos: You see, people are objecting to that observation on my part.

Mr Gilchrist: Because it's incorrect.

Mr Kormos: People are objecting. Go talk to the workers from Mott's in St Catharines. They had good jobs. They were unionized jobs; that's part of why they were good jobs. They were good-paying jobs. Not great-paying jobs, good-paying jobs. They had some security, or some sense of security, the people who worked at Mott's. The plant ran away on them, gone, like that — jobs eliminated. You've got people with lifetimes in that workplace, just right out of luck.

It doesn't take long to get off UIC — what do they call it now, employment insurance? — on to welfare rolls. It doesn't take long to move from a good-paying job in this Ontario of 1998, a job that appeared to have a future. It doesn't take long to move from that on to Bill 22, on to workfare, when you have companies like Mott's just shutting down and moving out.

Talk to the folks down at Ucar in Welland. Talk to the workers there. There were 200 jobs — finished. These workers aren't going to be allowed to finish out their own work careers, never mind have jobs available for their sons and their daughters unless their sons and daughters finish high school and community college. Another run-away plant: 90 years reaping profits off the hard work of all kinds of people down in Welland and across Niagara region. Just shut her down and move on. Don't even sell

the property. You know why? Because they don't want to create competition. It's not that they haven't made money out of that Ucar plant down in Welland. They made lots of money, lots of profit. Are they prepared to share that with the workers whose lives are being destroyed, whose families' lives are being destroyed? Are they prepared to share that? No. What's this government got to say to them? Workfare? Bill 22?

We went through the workfare hearings with some interest because across the province, once again, the government tried to whip up some support for its so-called workfare scheme. I know what the data are, I know what the numbers are. We're told the welfare rolls are reduced. I know there has been some modest upturn in the economy. I also know what kind of jobs people are increasingly being required to do.

Let me put this to you. I recall when I was a student back a good chunk of time now, back in the 1970s, a university student like a whole lot of other people. Jobs were plentiful. They were the low-paying jobs, they were the minimum-wage jobs. They were in the retail sector or in the service sector, and not just down in Niagara but up here in Toronto as well. As I visit some of these same workplaces now, I see that the people doing these jobs, inevitably part-time, temporary, at minimum wage, are no longer students and other young people; it's their parents doing those jobs now. If they're lucky, they've got two or three of them so they can have some modest hope of maintaining the households, the homes they've been paying for and investing in over the course of working lifetimes.

That's Mike Harris's Ontario: minimum-wage Ontario. It's temporary job Ontario. It's part-time Ontario. It's if you're really lucky, you've got two or three of those jobs, because that's the only way you can generate enough income to keep the mortgage payments up to date and keep food on the table. That involves so many people. Visits to the food banks as well.

What's remarkable, as we witness what this government says — decreases in unemployment and decreases of the welfare rolls — we witness increases in the utilization of food banks. Go talk to the people down at the Daily Bread Food Bank here in Toronto. Talk to Ms Cox or any of the people who work there with her. She'll tell you about a food bank that's never had as strong a demand placed on it. Before the month is over, inevitably it ends up with bare cupboards and with people who turn away disappointed, their tattered plastic bags empty. All they've been looking for is a couple of cans of whatever it was, and maybe a couple of boxes of macaroni and cheese dinner to feed hungry kids.

2120

Talk to the people who run soup kitchens. Welfare rolls down? That's what the minister tells us. Welfare rolls are down, and the reliance on soup kitchens has never been this strong. Go to some of the soup kitchens here in Toronto. You don't have to stay in Toronto. You can go to small-town Ontario too. Come down to Welland and go to

soup kitchens. You can go to St Catharines and go to soup kitchens.

You can go right up here, like I've done, up to Bloor Street, in the middle of the carriage trade, just a couple of doors down from Holt Renfrew and across the road from Birks Jewellers, to the little church at the corner of Avenue Road and Bloor. Go in the basement there at lunchtime — a soup kitchen. In the midst of the carriage trade, a soup kitchen operating to capacity.

Welfare rolls are down? Well, levels of homelessness, especially among children, have never been higher. Welfare rolls are down, and the incidence of homelessness has never been higher, especially among kids.

What's fascinating is that the profile of who is homeless has changed dramatically within a few short years. I don't want to be presumptuous, and let's understand that I'm making old generalizations — I concede that — but there was a point in our history where the homeless person was perhaps the idiosyncrat or the eccentric. There was the phenomenon of substance abuse, addiction to drugs; any number of drugs, I suppose, alcohol included. Then when we saw the withdrawal of support for mental health programs, we saw persons with mental illnesses and survivors of psychiatric treatment swelling the ranks of the homeless. That again was yet a new profile.

We're seeing an entirely new phenomenon now. I've met with these people and I've been to some of the hostels and I've been to the soup kitchens. It's moved far beyond what it has been historically, even in our recent history. Because now you've got whole families, you've got increasing numbers, as I say, of children — kids, literally kids. You've got university graduates. You have people who but a year or two ago were working at decent-paying jobs. But once those jobs disappear and once the EI or UIC runs out and you're up on Mike Harris's workfare, there isn't enough left to keep the apartment or the home you were living in. People are being transformed in mere months from relatively middle-class lifestyles to lifestyles of despair and total overwhelming poverty.

Let me tell you that yet a new little blip in who is homeless in this province is increasingly going to be seniors, retirees, that grey-haired generation, the folks who thought they'd done all the right things, folks who inevitably had worked hard, had saved, had put their kids through school. But in Niagara region alone, where this government's downloading has resulted in \$18 million in new property taxes, these same seniors, living on fixed incomes, what with more and more, newer and higher user fees in almost every facet of their life, are now facing the prospect of yet even higher property taxes. A new profile of who's homeless in this province: It's seniors.

What does homelessness mean? It means to be deprived of decent accommodations that you can afford to sustain. Increasing numbers of seniors are finding themselves living with the dread — because you know what's probably worse than being homeless itself? It's living with the fearful anticipation of the day that it's going to happen. Think about that. As bad as if not worse than being homeless itself is being in your home, knowing that it

could be tomorrow or the next day or maybe the day after, but knowing that within the foreseeable future the bailiff's going to come to the door.

You know how that process takes place? You know how the bailiff evicts families? They use those big green garbage bags and they load up what's left willy-nilly into those garbage bags, they tie off the tops and throw them out on the sidewalk. That's where families end up when they're homeless.

Those possessions, once they're but the contents of green garbage bags piled in a heap on a public sidewalk, start to lose some of their relevance and some of their value. Do you ever wonder how sometimes homeless people seem to have an obsessive sense of property over what appears to be the most modest collection of personal belongings in those tattered A&P or Zehrs bags that have been around the block more than a couple of times? You see, most of those people owned far more than what they

own in their shopping carts. Most of those people had homes, most of those people had families, most of those people had furniture and bank accounts.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm supposed to interrupt the proceedings at 9:25. Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 4, 1998, I'm now required to put every question.

Mr Klees has moved third reading of Bill 22.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It being almost 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2127.

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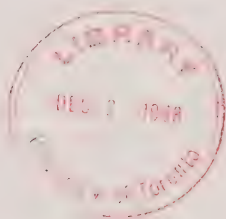
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Mardi 24 novembre 1998



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 November 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 novembre 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POLICE SERVICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Today, representatives of police departments from across Ontario have been visiting with members of the Legislature and sharing with them the many challenges facing police officers in various communities and some recommendations designed to enhance and improve police services to the public.

What is clear to any objective observer is that the level of service is directly related to the number of front-line officers available for duty and the quality of training that has been available to those officers. While announcements and reannouncements of funding for additional police officers are made rather easily, front-line police officers will believe them only when they see an additional complement of police in the field, with the emphasis on the word "additional."

The stress and strain of police work can take its toll on officers, particularly when they are too few in number to meet the expectations of the public and the responsibilities assigned to them as officers of the law. Few jobs in our society involve the potential for serious injury and death on a daily basis, yet that is exactly the reality which faces men and women of our police departments as they fight crime in our communities.

What we need in our society is a timely response to calls for help from citizens; a visible police presence in our communities; police concern for all crime, not just violent crime; and police who are available at all times of the day and night.

Police officers have served our communities well in the past. They can only do so in the future with our strong support.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I want to talk about the Ontario Northland bus service in the north. Saving Ontario Northland's bus service is an important issue for people who live in northern Ontario. I want to be direct with the Minister of Northern Development and

Mines and let him know that this issue will not go away, as much as he would like it to. My colleague Gilles Bisson and I will continue to fight to reverse the decision to axe bus service in my riding of Cochrane North.

Bus service is not just a fringe service that people can go without in northern Ontario. Over the past few weeks, I've received lots of letters from constituents which illustrate the impact and severity of these cuts: a grandmother visiting her family, students leaving Opasatika for the weekend, youths from the children's treatment centre going to visit their family in Hearst.

On November 14, on a frigid afternoon and evening, over 30 people in Kapuskasing came together to demonstrate their support for maintaining bus services in northern Ontario.

I understand the ONTC has assembled a passenger service review committee that will review all land passenger services early in the new year, but this simply does not make any sense. Why would you axe services and then say you're going to review the whole system? Wouldn't it make more sense to conduct a review and then consider what measures one can take in order to protect bus services?

On behalf of my constituents, I urge the minister and the ONTC to rescind this decision and wait till the review process is completed before proceeding with any action on cutting service.

HOWARD HARAMIS

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): Today I pay tribute to Howard Haramis, the late mayor of Renfrew, who passed away on November 17. Howie, as he was known by all, was a solid municipal partner, a dynamic leader, a supporter of this government and a close friend. He is remembered as one of the hardest-working and most effective mayors in the Ottawa Valley.

His political career started early. He served as town councillor from 1962 to 1966 and was elected mayor in 1966, the youngest mayor in Canada. He was again elected in 1991 and 1994 and had completed one year of his latest term.

Over those years, Howie left his own unique touch, promoting the town of Renfrew wherever he went. He worked with all politicians of all stripes, so long as they shared his vision of prosperity and progress for the taxpayers of the town of Renfrew and surrounding areas.

He partnered with this government to fill empty industrial space and create jobs. He selflessly supported one-

tier government and ardently believed in and acted upon the principle that the best way to help people was to help them help themselves.

The town of Renfrew and the province of Ontario have lost an exceptional leader. Our deepest sympathies to Howie's wife, Wayne, and to his family.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I see that you're here today, Mr Speaker, with a new haircut and a new riding, and all is well with you. I just wanted to congratulate you on your victory at your nomination meeting last night.

I know the Speaker would agree with me on the issue I'm about to talk about, school closures. In his riding, along with ridings right across the old Metro Toronto, which is now the city of Toronto, many schools are threatened with closure. Repeatedly we heard many people talk about the fact that these are community schools. They are the very heart of the community. For many people across this city, they represent the only place they can go and meet with their neighbours and have all kinds of recreational activities and programs that otherwise they would not have. Schools are more than just schools in Toronto.

I think the message is becoming loud and clear that this government has botched it completely. It rescinded its initiative, it has gone back, but no one is fooled by it. Make no mistake, no one believes that this is the end of the story. This stay of execution is just that, a stay of execution. You haven't fooled anyone, and I think at the end of the day the people of the city of Toronto will not forget that this government does not intend to make education a priority.

ST PETER'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I also add my congratulations on your personal victory last evening.

I rise to again raise the plight of St Peter's Hospital in my riding, a hospital that has been jerked around, quite frankly, by this government from the day they took power.

Let's take a look. Back in July 1994, our NDP government approved a renovation project to the tune of \$12 million to replace the south wing, a project that had been ongoing for years and years. In February 1996, the government said, "Yes, we agree with the NDP. We're going to allow that project to continue," and they funded half the cost of beginning the excavation. We now have a 20-foot hole in the ground, the size of a football field, behind St Peter's. Then, in January last year, you halted all the expansion, you halted all the construction, and the hole sat there. When I asked the minister on February 19, 1997, what he was going to do about it, he said, "We're going to wait till the health restructuring commission makes their report."

The health restructuring commission originally recommended that we close that hospital. Our community stood

up and fought back and, united, we saved St Peter's Hospital. The commission in their following recommendation agreed with us and said there ought to be long-term beds that go in that facility. That was their recommendation. Then, when the minister finally had an opportunity to fulfill the future destiny of St Peter's, he stuck it to them. He didn't give them one single bed in that announcement. Speaker, the hitting against St Peter's has to stop.

1340

VETERANS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Today I would like to talk about the real lessons of Canadian history that we can learn from people in our province. I'm speaking of people like Fred Smith, a resident of Carleton Lodge, from my riding of Nepean. Fred is a 98-year-old veteran whose recollections provide a historical lesson like no other. At the age of 14, Fred was separated from his father, John, who headed overseas to fight in World War I. Longing to see his father, young Fred lied about his age and enlisted in the armed forces. In 1916, he went overseas as part of the 198th Battalion. Fred met his father in 1917 on the battlefields of Passchendaele. The memories of this encounter are bittersweet for Fred, though. Not long after the brief reunion, Fred's father was tragically killed in battle.

The story of Passchendaele is an important part of Canadian history. It was up to Canadians to capture the elusive Passchendaele Ridge and, by so doing, salvage British respectability. In the end, Canadians overcame both the impassable landscape and the determined resistance to achieve a victory few thought possible. Each year fewer and fewer of our wartime veterans are with us. This sad reality reminds us that the wisdom and insight of our veteran neighbours, like Fred Smith, should be explored and celebrated each and every day.

I would also like to highlight the efforts of Brian McClean, project manager of the Access to History program, and Gord Davis of the Royal Canadian Legion. Brian and Gord are working very hard to help produce and distribute essential Canadian history books which can be used by Ontario students. I am thankful for the leadership Brian, Gord and others with the Royal Canadian Legion have shown with respect to recognizing our collective past.

The peace and security we have enjoyed for more than 80 years came at a very heavy price. Lest we forget.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Yesterday we heard with great fanfare the Minister of the Environment tell us that he's bringing in tough new legislation to go after individuals who don't pay fines or individuals convicted of environmental violations in this province. What the minister, who has overseen the greatest dismantlement of the ministry in the history of this province, failed to tell us is that he has no staff to enforce these

regulations. These regulations have been eliminated. The auditors told us that this minister, who's now heckling across the floor and won't answer questions in the House, has failed miserably in updating regulations, has failed miserably in upgrading standards in this province and in protecting our environment.

Yesterday, Captain Environment came across as a tough guy, "I'm going to crack down," after a 40% staff reduction, after a 35% reduction in the budget. What he has failed to tell us is that this is nothing more than a chest-pounding exercise to make himself feel good and to make up for the sins of the past. The reality is that it is too late; he has no staff left. What he should do is follow the lead that was brought up yesterday by some police departments across this province — install a cut-out of Premier Harris — because there's no staff left outside —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Come to order, member for Hamilton East. You're done.

Member for Riverdale.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Earlier this morning I hosted a press conference by the Environmental Bureau of Investigation and the Sierra Legal Defence Fund. EBI has charged the Ontario government under the Environmental Protection Act for radioactive contamination of the natural environment west of the Deloro mine site. The Minister of Environment is more than familiar with this site. He has even called it "Ontario's most contaminated land." Well, he can talk the talk but he won't walk the walk.

EBI has already taken the ministry to court over water pollution charges at the site. They know that the ministry has carried out an investigation as a result of those charges. They know that a report exists. They've tried to obtain a copy but the ministry will not give it to them.

MOE and the Prince Edward and Hastings county health units are withholding information on the health impacts of the contamination from the Deloro mine site that the EBI has requested through the freedom of information act. The question is, what exactly do they know that they don't want the public and the province to find out about?

Meanwhile, we find out that the Ministry of the Environment investigation staff don't even have a Geiger counter so that they can measure radioactivity. If this government didn't think that their cuts to investigative and enforcement staff in the Ministry of Environment were leading to any problems, let this stand as a warning.

Minister, release those reports immediately.

CONTAINER SERVICES ARM

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize Container Services ARM, located in my riding of Northumberland. Tonight this small business will be receiving a pollution prevention achievement award at the energy and environment awards banquet.

Container Services ARM is indeed worthy of such an award. The company's primary business is the cleaning,

reconditioning and recertification of intermediate bulk containers, often called "totes." So far this year, Container Services has reduced its use of sodium hydroxide, which is used in the tote cleaning process, by 11,000 tonnes. This was accomplished by the installation of a closed-loop recycling system.

In addition, plastic containers which are no longer suitable for transporting goods are shredded and granulated for recycling. This is a 100% diversion of plastic from the landfill sites and is a positive example of resource recovery.

The pollution prevention awards program, sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, is a way of recognizing businesses which find ways to reduce pollution and protect the environment.

Mr James Routh, principal of Container Services, will be attending tonight's awards ceremony and will be receiving an award from the small facilities category. Container Services of Colborne is an example of how small business can work to develop environmentally acceptable practices through innovation.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CERTIFIED ENGINEERING TECHNICIANS AND TECHNOLOGISTS ACT, 1998

Mr Baird moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr25, An Act respecting the Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 95(g), requirement for notice be waived with respect to private member's ballot item number 37.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): She's apparently just outside. If you want to stand it down, you can go to your second question.

Mr McGuinty: No, I see she's here, Speaker.

Minister, you will know that a very important report was released today by the United Way. It's called *Freedom from Violence: Helping Abused Women and their Children*. It describes in some detail the pain and suffering being experienced by women who are abused and their children. Most importantly, it says that you and your government must assume responsibility for placing these women and these children at even greater risk. The United Way is saying that you and your government are making matters worse for abused women and children in Ontario. Will you now stand up, Minister, and admit that your policies are making a bad situation worse and commit to a complete turnaround, both in attitude and in policy?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I will admit no such thing because that is not the case. In response to his supplementary, I know my colleague the minister responsible for women's affairs can talk about the good things and the positive things we have been doing to help women who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

1350

Mr McGuinty: Let's listen to some of the stuff the United Way put out today. The United Way says: "The...reduction to welfare has made it more difficult for these women to escape violence. After the reduction in 1995, 66% of Ontario shelters reported women were returning to or remaining with abusive partners because they could no longer afford to leave." What's more, this report says: "Abused women and their children are staying longer in women's shelters due to the lack of affordable housing.... Because of this, there is a shortage of shelter beds for new arrivals."

Tell me, Minister, how is that you can find \$47 million for your political advertising, but you can't find any money to help women in Ontario and their children who are the subjects of abuse?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I'd like to refer this question to my colleague the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): Obviously some of us had not had the opportunity to read the report. Violence against women is everyone's —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We asked that we have a copy of this, which was Purolated down early this afternoon. I haven't read the report. That may be a weakness on my part but it was just given to me. I will say that I have been busy and have been talking to the council of women who are here in the audience today. There have been other things happening today. The council of women for Ontario have been here speaking to us and they also are concerned about stopping the violence.

With regard to the United Way of Greater Toronto, we are absolutely so pleased to have them involved as one of the partners for communities across this province in solving problems to assist abused women and their children.

We know that in the last five years this government has a coordinated approach across nine ministries. We are spending over \$100 million more than the previous two governments. We have extensive programs in response to a major report that was put out in 1995. We are doing our very best, but we have more work to do.

Mr McGuinty: This is an objective report from the most credible of authorities. This report says that you and your government are making matters worse for women in Ontario, who are being abused at the hands of men, and their children. That's what this report says. You should stand up today and say that you are ashamed of the fact that your government is contributing to a lack of safety and security for women and children in Ontario. I want you to stand up now and tell us why you have determined that it is a greater priority to spend money on a political advertising campaign than it is to protect the welfare and safety of women and children in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: This government, the people of Ontario, are absolutely committed to stopping violence against women. It takes every single person in this province, throughout households, neighbourhoods and communities, to commit themselves to assist people who are in difficulty. This government has shown leadership, and will continue to do so, by providing programs for our young people in prevention and also in education. One of the most important pieces, I'm sure, that will come out here is that people must know what's out there, what's available to help them get through the system. The member from the third party who asked that question obviously should take a look at his own government's violence-against-women prevention programs, which are key to a program that will be adopted by governments across this country — every province and the territories — in putting out a framework to stop the violence against women.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Three and a half years ago to the day, in fact, Mike Harris promised one and a half million Ontarians with disabilities that he would introduce and pass in this Legislature a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Not only that, he promised to work with the ODA committee to draft and implement that act.

After two resolutions in this House and much foot-dragging, and given that there is an election on the horizon, you decided that you had to do something, that you had to do anything. So yesterday you introduced in this House an Ontarians with Disabilities Act that is gutless, toothless and worthless. Would you please stand up and tell us why it is that you and Mike Harris have broken

your promise to introduce in this Legislature a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I say that we have introduced a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act and we have kept our promise. In fact, I am proud of the bill that we are introducing because it does what no other bill has done for the disabled in Ontario. You, Leader of the Opposition, could have done it in your term in office and you did not do it.

Mr McGuinty: Just so all members are clear on what we're talking about here, this bill consists of two pages. The first page is nothing more than the preamble. The second page provides that there's going to be recognition of existing legal obligations. There are no new rights created and no real new responsibilities created for anybody who has dealings with the disabled community in Ontario. Two pages. This is gutless. It is toothless. Please stand up and tell us why it is that you've let down the disabled community of Ontario, 1.5 million strong, who were specifically promised that your government would introduce a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Hon Ms Bassett: I would say to the honourable member, you of all people should say size doesn't matter because you yourself introduced a bill, the very first bill you introduced in September 1995, which was a measly three paragraphs long. It is Bill 2, 1995.

Our proposed act would mandate the systemic review of all legislation. It is a step forward. You say the act guarantees no rights. Read the preamble to the bill. The rights of the disabled are guaranteed in the Human Rights Code. As for timelines, each and every single year, every ministry will have to report in their public business plans their progress on preventing and removing barriers to the disabled. This is, I guarantee you, a systematic plan to move the agenda forward for the removal and prevention of barriers for the disabled.

1400

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you had the opportunity to consult in a meaningful way with the disabled community and you did not do that. Furthermore, there was a precedent set in this House. A resolution was introduced by one of my members, Dwight Duncan. It specifically provided for a number of provisions that ought to be incorporated in a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act. That resolution was supported unanimously. In fact, 25 Conservative members in this Legislature supported this resolution. The last provision in this resolution reads: "The Ontarians with Disabilities Act must be more than mere window dressing. It should contribute meaningfully to the improvement of the position of persons with disabilities in Ontario. It must have real force and effect."

Not only have you broken Mike Harris's promise, not only have you not lived up to the commitment made by the Conservative members who voted in favour of this resolution, but you have dishonoured the disabled community here in Ontario. Again, why have you broken your specific commitment? Why are you failing to honour that promise made by Mike Harris to support —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Hon Ms Bassett: We have honoured the promise made by our leader. We are moving the agenda forward by bringing in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. When you bring up the resolution, I hope all members of this House would support the intent of a resolution to move forward on an agenda for removing and preventing barriers for the disabled.

We, on the other hand, did not want to bring in an expensive quota system, which is implied in the resolution. We did not want to set up another expensive review process. We already have the Ontario Human Rights Commission there. The resolution is pushing for that kind of thing.

All members of the House want to see the removal and prevention of barriers for the disabled and we certainly are doing that with this bill. I would remind the honourable member that the Liberals voted against employment equity, so to come on now for political reasons with something like that —

Interjections.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question for the Minister of Citizenship. It's about her cynical treatment of disabled people in Ontario.

Yesterday, you introduced this two-and-a-half page nothing and you tried to call it an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, an incredibly cynical move on your part, Minister. But what's even more cynical is that two months ago you boasted to my colleague the member for Beaches-Woodbine, and I quote, that you had sent your discussion paper to more than 7,000 interested parties, that you had consulted with 283 groups in eight communities and that you had received submissions from more than 240 individuals, and this sorry piece of cynical garbage is all that disabled people got.

Minister, admit what you're really up to. You got an order from the Premier's office, "Produce a bill, any bill at all," so that the Premier won't be embarrassed by his failure to live up to his promise. Admit it. That's the cynical strategy.

Hon Ms Bassett: The Premier is sticking to his promise and I am proud of the bill we are bringing forward.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): You really are rich.

The Speaker: Hold on.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Shame on you, absolute shame. The audacity to stand there and say that.

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa West.

Hon Ms Bassett: I would say that I'm proud of the ODA that we're bringing in. The proposed act is going to mandate that all government ministries systematically review all of their legislation, all of their programs, all of their policies, all of their practices and all of their services with an eye to accessibility. This means that literally thousands of pieces of government legislation and government activities that directly or indirectly affect the lives of the disabled will be reviewed on an annual basis. That

is going to directly change what is happening with the disabled in this province.

It won't happen overnight. It will happen in time. This is a systematic plan that no one else has brought in, let alone your government when your very own member, who was disabled, did not bring it in.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Minister, that is not only shameful; your performance here is despicable in terms of what you are saying about people with disabilities and what they are demanding in this province. You are putting out a red herring that they are talking about quota laws. They have never asked you for a quota law. They have asked you for a law to remove barriers.

You know what they said about your Premier today? They said that this is a slap in the face to persons with disabilities, that the Premier has punched them in the stomach, that he has totally betrayed them. How can you stand here and say that you are proud of this? They don't want to deal with you any more. They want to deal with the man who is making the decisions.

Minister, will you facilitate a meeting between the persons with disabilities, the Ontarians With Disabilities Act Committee and the Premier so they can tell him face to face that this bill doesn't merit the name the Ontarians with Disabilities Act?

Hon Ms Bassett: I would say to the honourable member that I am proud of the bill I have brought forward. ODAC has been helpful to us. I would expect them to be angry if they do not get everything that is on their agenda.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon Ms Bassett: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to thank ODAC for their input. If I were looking for a lobbyist for any cause, I would hire David Lepofsky of ODAC. He's been absolutely admirable in pushing forward his agenda, and so he should be. But my role as a legislator is not the same as his. We, as the government, have to balance the interests of all sectors of our society, and that's what we have done.

We listened to over 283 groups during our consultations in the summer and we heard certain key messages that we have answered, maybe not in the way that members of the opposition would want us to answer, but we share the same goal of moving the agenda forward for the people who are disabled. We are doing that and you are going to see improvement, and I can say that with a pure conscience to the people who are disabled.

Ms Lankin: Minister, it's not a question of not giving them everything they wanted. You didn't give them anything that they asked for, that they demanded and that they are entitled to in this province. It is a shameful day to hear you stand there and give that kind of patronizing answer to the persons with disabilities in this province and to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee.

1410

They spoke very clearly about the principles that needed to be achieved to remove barriers to access. Your bill doesn't even begin to accomplish that. Your parliamentary

assistant, who went around this province, is shamefaced in terms of what you have come forward with.

Minister, I can't think of anything else to say to you but resign, get out of the way, and have the Premier meet with these people face to face and defend his lack of action and his complete betrayal of people with disabilities in this community.

Hon Ms Bassett: I would say that we are taking steps to remove barriers for the disabled. Our proposed legislation will mandate government to review all its legislation, practices, programs and services. In an orderly, systematic way each year, what has been proposed and what has been reviewed will be submitted to Management Board. It will be open to the public, and the public will see what is happening. The fact that it is mandatory is going to move the agenda forward.

This government is keeping its promise made to the people of Ontario to introduce legislation that is going to help prevent and remove barriers to the disabled, and you are going to see changes occur because of it.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Minister of Citizenship again: As you know, the Trillium Foundation has done excellent work in Ontario for 16 years, since 1982, on a very non-partisan basis. But now we find out that you're going to change all that. You're now going to appoint 400 political appointees to decide how the Trillium Foundation will work. It's not enough that there are 125 good community volunteers, it's not enough that there's a good, professional staff; you want to make 400 political appointments to the Trillium Foundation.

Minister, can you tell us why all of a sudden the Trillium Foundation has to have 400 political appointees to decide what community organizations get some of that grant money?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I would say that during our consultations we heard from local people that they wanted to have decisions made at a local level, and that is exactly what we are doing. The grant review team, when it is up and running, will be distributing millions of dollars. That money will be going to local areas, to local projects, and the people in charge of that will be people who are involved in the community.

Mr Hampton: The fallacy of this is that there are already 125 long-serving community volunteers across this province who have ensured that the Trillium Foundation and the way it operates is completely non-partisan and a community service. No one called out for 400 Conservative political hacks to be appointed to the Trillium Foundation to now decide how the money is going to be handed out.

So I ask you again, Minister: Why do you need 400 Conservative political appointments, 400 Conservative political hacks, to interfere with the good work of the Trillium Foundation?

Hon Ms Bassett: As we divide up the \$100 million — *Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Just a minute. Let's get some order in here, please. Thank you. Minister.

Hon Ms Bassett: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I said earlier, local people make local decisions, and this is what the people in the areas, when we travelled across the province, told us they wanted to do. There is going to be \$100 million given out, which is 10 times more than charities had before. I've written to key charities, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, MPPs and community leaders, inviting them to recommend individuals for the grant review team. All members in the House have done that. Some of those people are being appointed to the grant review team. We feel this a fair and equitable process that is going to do the best possible for the people of Ontario. We are answering exactly what they said they wanted to see happen. That's what we're doing.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, member for Ottawa West.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Very few New Democrat MPPs in this Legislature received your October 30 letter, neither at their office at Queen's Park or at their constituency office. If that's not revealing enough, Minister, your letter gave a deadline of 20 days to receive applications for membership on the grant review team. By anyone's measure, that's hardly enough time to canvass the relevant community.

The people in Ontario have a right to know that the \$100 million of their money is being granted on the basis of merit and not political connection. Minister, I ask you to stop this program of political appointments and let the Trillium Foundation carry on its work without political interference from your ministry.

Hon Ms Bassett: As you know, the Chair of Management Board announced that the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the province would consult with charities and not-for-profit organizations to develop the framework for distributing future casino revenue to charities. I'm taking you back over the process. Honestly, the honourable member doesn't seem to know what the process —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon Ms Bassett: We held consultations, and during those consultations in eight communities across Ontario charities were asked for their views and advice on the process this would take. We arrived at our conclusions based on what they said, and on November 2 all the letters were out.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week I received a response to a freedom of information request I had made to your ministry. According to this response, in 1995-96 there were 17,000 students in receipt of social assistance while attending full-time post-secondary studies. You will know that the next year you

and Mike Harris decided to force these individuals off social assistance. Any individual who was on social assistance who wanted to go to college or university was cut off from the assistance that your ministry provides and was forced to go on to student assistance and into debt. In fact, according to this response, in 1996-97 your ministry transferred some \$100 million to the Ministry of Education and Training to cover loans to these students. Those are the facts, according to your ministry response.

My question is, will you tell us exactly how much Andersen Consulting was paid for those 17,000 individuals who were forced off social assistance rolls and into debt?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I don't know why the honourable member needed to do a freedom of information inquiry to get that information. We had it in our press release the first fall that this information was out in terms of the change, because we think individuals who are in financial need for welfare should be getting that. Those who are going to school and need financial support get that through OSAP; in many cases it can be a more generous allowance than they can have from the welfare system. It meets their educational needs much better. I'd also like to state to the honourable member, who also I believe should know this, that Andersen Consulting had absolutely nothing to do with it.

1420

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary, member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): We know that Andersen Consulting is getting its money from you, \$180 million to a private company, as the welfare rolls are reduced. We know that 17,000 students were reduced, not because Andersen did something so clever but because you changed the rules.

I'd like to send a copy of this memo over to you, which is your direction to people at local offices who collect the statistics on people who leave the welfare rolls. Very clearly in this memo you have told the local offices, when they collect data on why people leave the rolls, "Do not use self-initiated job finds." That tells us that the only thing they have left to select on their screen when they close a file is people who were on the workfare program, and that bolsters the workfare numbers — not because people found a job by themselves.

My question is, you found every manner to increase the number —

The Speaker: Question?

Mrs Pupatello: — that looks like you've managed to change the welfare rolls because you've done something well, or Andersen has, and you are directing them to change the way they collect their data.

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, I really wish she would be clear in what she's talking about, because yet again she has not understood what is happening. The policy changes in terms of the decisions we're making around Ontario Works, for

example, are savings which accrue to the taxpayers. As she knows full well, Andersen is only paid from savings that result from the Andersen project. The project has to do with changes in the technology and how the program is delivered. There are \$2.8 billion of savings to date that we have achieved for the taxpayers of Ontario.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Ecker: If she'd stop heckling, we could all hear ourselves think. I would like to remind the honourable member that when her government was in power they did not think the question of where people go when they leave the welfare system was very important. We think it is, and that's why we have done —

The Speaker: Thank you.

LIVENT INC

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Culture. The people of Ontario have been hearing a great deal about the multi-million dollar failure of Livent productions, and now it looks as if the CIBC, which has been making quite a lot of money — \$1.5 billion this year — will push Livent into bankruptcy within the next 30 days. This is a situation that is going to affect over 1,000 musicians, actors, stagehands and theatre crews who will lose well-paying jobs; stable jobs, I might add. Jobs like these are few and far between, and these people are going to be left out in the cold because they are stuck in the middle of two big giants. It's going to leave a gaping hole in the economy of Toronto and I dare say Ontario.

If the Premier of Ontario is ready and willing to go down to New York and hobnob on behalf of Stratford, what are you going to do right now and right here to help these artists and the businesses that are affected by this and depend on them? What are you going to do to help them out?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I cannot, as you know, speak about Livent, since it's before the courts, but I can say that this theatre community in Toronto, with or without Livent, is absolutely booming. You only had to be at the Lieutenant Governor's awards the other night. I missed you, by the way; you should have been there, honourable member.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister.

Hon Ms Bassett: To pick up where I left off, what I want to say is that theatre in this city is absolutely booming. I am proud that so many companies that were facing financial problems a few years ago are now increasing their audiences by the hundreds, they are in the black, they are moving forward and they are becoming more self-sustaining. We are coming into the forefront more and more in this country as the theatre capital.

Mr Marchese: I'm glad to hear the minister say that with respect to this particular problem she's got nothing to say, and with respect to the rest of the cultural world out there she's saying everything is fine, don't worry, even

though they've cut millions and millions of dollars from the cultural sector. Perhaps to the next supplementary you might be a little more helpful, you and the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations perhaps.

This morning, one of my staff people phoned Ticketmaster because Livent has already cancelled several of its shows at the Ford Centre in North York, and this is the recorded announcement we heard:

"To the best of our information, all Livent performances will be taking place as scheduled. We will update this message as additional information becomes available. For any information concerning Phantom of the Opera, shows at the Ford Centre or any other Livent productions, please call Livent directly."

So we did, and we were told they had no information and that the Ford Centre was still deciding what to do.

The Speaker: Question?

Mr Marchese: Minister, the city of Toronto is considering a rescue package to help these people. What are you and the other minister going to do to cease their sale of tickets —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Ms Bassett: I will say that of course I support in any way I can theatre in this city, but the matter regarding the tickets at the Ford Centre is a matter for the board and the city of Toronto to decide. It's not something I can interfere in.

COMMUNITY POLICING

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): My question is to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services. Constituents in my riding of Niagara South have consistently told me that they take the issue of community safety very seriously, with good reason. Under the NDP, the number of front-line police officers in the region declined significantly. I understand, Minister, that you and the Premier made an announcement today that's going to reverse that trend.

Earlier this year, the Crime Control Commission held a forum in Port Colborne, and the consistent suggestion from the people of Niagara South was that an increase in police visibility would help keep the community safe. Could you inform the House how today's announcement will address these concerns and promote public safety in the community of Niagara South and the Niagara region?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I want to thank the member for Niagara South for his question. I know he's long been a strong advocate of community policing, and like him, I've heard similar concerns across the province for many years.

I did have the pleasure this morning, with the Premier, to announce the results of the community policing partnership program, which will result in 1,000 new police officers on the front lines across this province — 1,000 new police officers, an unprecedented announcement.

I must say for the member from Niagara, the announcement today —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Ottawa West, come to order, please. Kingston and The Islands.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I know, but I can still hear you. You're out of order, and Kingston and The Islands as well, you're out of order. Minister.

Hon Mr Runciman: For Niagara, that will mean 55 new police officers on the front line.

We're hearing a lot of catcalls from the Liberal opposition. I want to say that if the federal Liberal government would get involved in this program — they're spending estimates of up to \$1 billion on registration of long guns for law-abiding Canadians across this country. If they invested some of that money in front-line policing, we could see an additional 2,000 or 3,000 officers in Ontario, if the federal Liberal government would participate.

1430

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Minister. After years of decline under the NDP government, it is going to be well received in the Niagara region that 55 new police officers are coming to the region.

When this program was announced, the police officers I spoke to were thrilled at the prospect of new front-line officers. The one concern they brought forward was that they wanted to ensure that these were actually new front-line police officers. I would like the minister to inform the House exactly how this program works and how we ensure that these are in fact new additional police officers who are going to be front-line, on the beat.

Hon Mr Runciman: I can assure the member that this program was developed to increase the total number of police officers in Ontario's communities. Through this program, our government will match up to 50% of the salary, benefits and other payroll costs of newly hired officers over each of the next five years. Funding will only be provided for newly hired officers who represent additions to the strength of the police service. Hiring due to attrition will not be eligible for this program. Police services must increase the complement of new front-line officers above the number of sworn-in officers reported for June 15. Services are not eligible if the number of sworn-in officers falls below those June 15 numbers.

The bottom line is that this program will result in new additional police officers to the tune of 1,000 new officers on the streets of Ontario communities.

Once again, I will plead with the Liberal members across the floor to encourage their federal —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order. Member for Perth, it's your day off today.

stration tax. That was designed because the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that you were acting illegally in collecting probate fees that —

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: Don't get mad at me; you can get mad at the Supreme Court, but that's what they ruled.

You have done the same thing with property taxes for education, which the courts ruled was illegal. Your Bill 160 says that you will set \$5.5 billion of property taxes by regulation. In my opinion, the Supreme Court has ruled that illegal.

My question is this: Are you planning to introduce legislation to correct Bill 160 and make it legal for you to collect \$5.5 billion of property taxes?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): There has been a court case with regard to Bill 160. Bill 160 was challenged. Five out of the six major provisions of Bill 160 were upheld by the courts. The sixth matter with regard to the right of the separate schools to tax is under appeal at the present time and it wouldn't be proper for me to comment on that. I will say that in terms of the ability to set taxes by regulation, other provinces have gone that same route and I am unaware of any court decision which invalidates that particular process.

Mr Phillips: The Supreme Court made this ruling on October 22. People in Ontario expect that you and your legal people would have reviewed that decision, would have looked at that matter. It's \$5.5 billion. By the way, the public should know we never debate this. This is all set down the hall in the Premier's office by regulation — \$5.5 billion. For my business friends, over half your property taxes are done by Mike Harris behind closed doors.

My question to you is this, very specifically: The Supreme Court ruled on October 22. Will you tell the public of Ontario, have you had that case reviewed in light of their decision and will you undertake to bring forward legislation to fix a significant problem that exists in Bill 160? Will you make that undertaking today?

Hon David Johnson: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has alluded to the situation with regard to the probate fees, of which, I might add, well over \$100 million was collected by a Liberal government during its jurisdiction. In the case of the probate fees, there is a decision of the court. In terms of Bill 160 there is an appeal that's working its way through the system at the present time. With regard to the separate schools, ability to tax, that is before the courts at the present time. It would not be proper for me to comment on that. That is the only matter that's before the court at the present time.

The approach taken by this provincial government is the approach taken by other provincial governments and has stood the test of time.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): This is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday the Harris government introduced a new tax called the estate admini-

ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Energy regarding an important project in my constituency. As the minister will know, in the early

1990s Ontario Hydro agreed to proceed with environmental studies and consultations around the possibility of completing the Patten Post hydro-electric generating station on the Mississagi River in Algoma district. The agreement at that time was that a decision would be made by 1999, and if Ontario Hydro decided not to proceed, they would pay funds to local communities for economic development instead.

I understand that Ontario Hydro asked the government to be relieved of this obligation in 1996, but as yet has not heard anything from the government on this matter. I'm informed that Ontario Hydro may be renewing that request for relief of the obligation. What is the government's response to Ontario Hydro's position?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I certainly appreciate the honourable member's question. As the honourable member will know, I and my deputy minister met with Mayor Farkouh of Elliot Lake just a few weeks ago on this particular matter. I would say to the honourable member that no decision has been made and that we're listening to his advice, representing his community. But I remind him that some \$243 million worth of taxpayers' money, ratepayers' money, has gone into that community already, so much of the commitment made by your government has been fulfilled. We'll continue to gather facts on the dam issue.

The problem, and I want to be honest with the honourable member now, is that we do not want Ontario Hydro to ever again be used as a social agency to bail out communities and we do not want Ontario Hydro to incur any debt. Since this government came to office in 1995, we have not let Ontario Hydro borrow any extra money. It has incurred no new debt. In fact it has paid off \$3 billion worth of debt, which I think is a record, over that period of time. So we don't want to incur any new debt or get into any projects that might incur new debt. However, we haven't ruled out fulfilling any obligation that may exist to your community.

1440

Mr Wildman: The minister will know that the agreement made in the early 1990s saved Ontario Hydro and the electricity consumers of Ontario a great deal of money because it was part of the agreement not to extend the very high-priced nuclear uranium contract. That was part of this. It saved the people of Ontario and electricity consumers a significant amount of money.

The minister knows there was a \$250-million agreement. The agreement, as I understand it, is that if Ontario Hydro does not meet its obligation by 1999, it would pay \$16 million. The question is, by what date in 1999 will we know whether Ontario Hydro is going to proceed, the beginning of 1999, June 1999 or the end of 1999? If the decision is not to proceed, then when will we know how much money, of the \$16 million, Ontario Hydro will pay into economic development in the region?

Hon Mr Wilson: Of the \$243 million that Ontario Hydro was forced to pay into the region because your government made them buy uranium at several times the

world price from Elliot Lake — you forgot the beginning of the story — which they ended up into contract —

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): We are the ones who ended that. It was your government and the Liberals that did that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Wilson: I want to correct the record, Mr Speaker. It was the Liberals that made the irresponsible decision to buy uranium at several times world prices, using Ontario Hydro as a social agency. We went from the best energy prices in North America under the previous Conservative government to the third highest in North America under the Liberals and NDP because they consistently abused Ontario Hydro, used it as a social agency, as a social development tool, took it away from its original 90-year mandate, which was to supply power at cost to the people of Ontario.

Since we came in in 1995, there's been no new borrowing, no new debt, \$3 billion paid off, superior management put in and now we're looking forward to competition in the year 2000 and all the jobs that will come with that and that have come with that as a result of the legislation.

I want to say to the honourable member, though, that we've made no final decision with respect to the particular matter at Elliot Lake and the dam in question. One of the options we're looking at is can we get other investors interested in the area. That's something I'm actively pursuing. I'll keep the member up to date —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

PORK INDUSTRY

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. A week ago I had a meeting with the pork producers in my constituency office in Haldimand-Norfolk — in Brant-Haldimand, pardon me; it's newly Haldimand-Norfolk. There's a very real problem in the loss of the pork industry in Ontario.

The two largest contributors to the Ontario economy are the auto industry and the agrifood business. Both are vital to the economic wellbeing of our province, and the pork industry is a major part of the agrifood sector. This industry contributes 43,000 jobs and \$4.5 billion in economic activity to the province.

As you are aware, the price for pork has fallen for reasons that are completely out of their hands. Minister, you showed tremendous leadership during the eastern Ontario ice storm and I'm confident that you will once again demonstrate that strong leadership in this issue. Can you inform the House what you are doing to help pork producers in my riding and throughout Ontario to get through this problem?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank the honourable member for Brant-Haldimand for that question. This

government is painfully aware of what our hog producers are living right now: prices that were totally unexpected and absolutely not covering even close the actual cash cost of production.

We're working very closely with my colleague from the federal government, the Honourable Lyle Vanclief. We are working together so that upon his coming out with a policy we will be falling in very quickly. There is urgency in this matter and we certainly encourage participating farmers to draw on their NISA, their net farm income account, which is already funded by farmers and the federal and provincial governments.

We must always remember that the pork industry particularly is a very cyclical one, prices go up and down, but due to the Asian economic problems, we hit the bottom of the cycle at the same time as Asia hit the bottom of their economic cycle. They are major purchasers of pork from Canada, particularly from Ontario. That will return. However, there is major urgency, and we are working on a national disaster fund with the federal minister in order to face these very difficult economic times that our pork producers are indeed facing.

Mr Preston: The pork producers are only producing enough pork to feed Ontario, but with the squeals around here, maybe they're overproducing.

On December 1, the pork producers are holding a rally at the doors of the Legislature. I will be part of that rally. We have to do something to help them, something that will not boomerang in trade problems from the States. What can be done to preserve the pork industry in Ontario?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I can assure all members of this House that I too fully support Ontario's pork producers. Indeed, I've had the opportunity of meeting quite a number of them recently, as I'm sure other members have. I know our pork producers, our growers of grains and oil seeds, basically all of our people in the red meat industry are going through some very difficult times. You know that we in this government, farm groups and the federal government are looking at the best ways to address this.

We must also remember that we cannot find ourselves in a position to be countervailed, and that's another area that we are very concerned about. The federal minister has been in regular contact with me, and on this issue and a number of other issues I expect he will likely be looking for support in the near future. I can assure all members of this House that he has the total and unadulterated support of this government and this minister.

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. I was very disturbed to receive a copy of a letter that was sent to first- and second-year science students at Queen's University relating to the enrolment in their biochemistry specialization program. Let me tell you what this letter says. It says that due to budget constraints, the department will only be able to provide 48 laboratory spaces in the third-year core course program for this specialized program. Currently

there are 148 registered first- and second-year students in this program. Minister, let me read to you the last line of the letter: "The government has made limiting the size of our program unavoidable."

What do you have to say to these students who after two years have had the expectation of being able to complete their program but now will be forced into a general science degree? Dr Clark, the head of the biochemistry department, is clear: You have cut back their money. What are you going to say to these students? They thought they'd be able to complete the program. They demand to know why you and Mike Harris have done this to them.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I would say to these students, as I would say to any students, that the operations of the universities come under the jurisdiction of the staff who run the universities. They are independent of the provincial government. We do give funding. I might say that the total funding to post-secondary institutions, to students, will total about \$3.3 billion over this next year.

I would say that I share the concern of students who are attempting to get into courses that apparently the university administrations are limiting. That's why we introduced the access to opportunities program, a program which may not be involved with this particular program, but the access to opportunities program opens up about 17,000 new positions in various high-tech programs — sciences, engineering — for students who formerly were turned away from their first choice.

1450

Mr Caplan: I'm not sure you understood the question because now two thirds of the students in this program aren't going to be able to attend.

Minister, you always blame somebody else, you're never accountable, and I wonder why that is. Ontario has the worst funding record in Canada. We're 10th out of 10. We have the highest tuitions in the country. You've been making students pay. They've been in this program for two years and they face tuitions of 20% increase since they've begun their program, and now you say to them, "Sorry, we're going to underfund your program even more, and it doesn't even matter because you're not going to be able to complete it."

I know this was a hard decision for the university. In fact, the course calendar at Queen's University calls this program "The flagship of the biochemistry program." Now you've crippled it. Minister, I'm going to ask you again. Why have you done this? Why have you ensured that students who have good grades are no longer able to complete a program of their choice?

Hon David Johnson: My response to Mr Doom and Gloom opposite is, if you want to put your finger on who is responsible for cutting assistance to universities in Canada, who is it? The federal government. The federal Liberals have cut assistance to universities in Canada.

Notwithstanding the reduction of \$2.4 billion to health and post-secondary education, according to the Maclean's list of best universities, we still have four of the top six universities in Canada right here in Ontario. In all

categories we have the best universities right here in Ontario, and I say to the member opposite, let's be proud of that.

STATUS OF LEGISLATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to raise a point of order under standing order 137(a) and (c) because I believe it is fundamentally wrong for legislation to stand in this House that is clearly and indisputably in violation of a Supreme Court decision that leaves us no room for interpretation.

The section I'm referring to is standing order 137: "The office of the legislative counsel shall:" — it is not permissive, it is a requirement of legislative counsel — "(a) Prepare and advise upon such legislation as may be required by the executive council or any member thereof and assist and advise members in all matters respecting the drafting of bills." I appreciate the fact that this is no longer in draft stage, but it goes on to say: "(c) Report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council any provisions in such bills deserving of special attention or that appear to pre-judicially affect the public interest or that require amendment."

I am not sure that we have ever had a precedent in this House where there is legislation which clearly stands in opposition to a Supreme Court ruling — if I may just place my point of order before you seek a response, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'm trying to get to the bill that you're speaking about.

Mrs McLeod: It is Bill 160.

The Speaker: Bill 160 is no longer before the House.

Mrs McLeod: I understand that.

The Speaker: OK, I'll hear you.

Mrs McLeod: I don't think there is a precedent that we can refer to in terms of a bill which is already drafted and passed, but where you have a Supreme Court decision that clearly has a bearing on that bill. My question to you is whether under this section of the standing orders the legislative counsel can be requested to advise on whether or not the Supreme Court's ruling has a bearing on legislation which has been passed by this House.

The Speaker: I'm going to take it under advisement and report back.

Petitions. The member for Essex-Kent.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Essex-South, Mr Speaker.

My friends Rose Kulimowski and May Mussolum from Essex, and others, have put this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Mike Harris is cutting the heart out of many communities by closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario; and

"Whereas this massive number of school closings all at once will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely; and

"Whereas Mike Harris is pitting parent against parent and community against community in the fight to save local schools; and

"Whereas parents and students in the city of Toronto and many other communities across Ontario are calling on the government to stop closing so many of their schools;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Mike Harris stop closing local schools."

In support of that, I sign my signature.

HOSPITAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition signed by 16,000 people in Ottawa-Carleton and eastern Ontario which was circulated by, among other people, Lowell Green of CFRA radio and Canada First. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the following:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission decreed and ordered in 1997 that hospitals serving the Ottawa-Carleton region be amalgamated to form the Ottawa Hospital; and

"Whereas the said restructuring commission did not order that the trustees of said Ottawa Hospital be elected democratically with accountability to the citizens of Ottawa-Carleton; and

"Whereas there was established a hospital corporation under the Corporations Act of Ontario with its head office in Ottawa; and

"Whereas the administration bylaw of February 1998 of said hospital provided for the government and management of said hospital corporation by a board of trustees; and

"Whereas said board of trustees was appointed by demonstrated flawed processes not acceptable in a modern democracy;

"Now, therefore, your petitioners publicly request the assembly to provide for local election to said board of trustees so that the people of Ottawa-Carleton shall acquire and have some inherent right of governing and regulating the internal affairs of said hospital corporation, and that it be stated and declared as a right of the people of the Ottawa-Carleton region that all said board trustees are trustees and servants of the people of Ottawa-

Carleton, at all times accountable to them and to the government of Ontario.

"The undersigned, all taxpayers of the province of Ontario, protest the manner in which David Levine was appointed as CEO of the newly amalgamated Ottawa Hospital. Regardless of Mr Levine's technical qualifications, we do not believe that a man who has worked and continues to work to break Canada apart is a suitable person to run our hospital.

"Furthermore, we insist that the present appointed board of trustees be dismissed and a process immediately established to provide us taxpayers the right to vote for the board.

"We also protest the failure of the Quebec government to compensate Ontario hospitals in the manner specified by the Canada Health Act, to which Quebec is a signatory. Failure to pay the full Ontario rate has penalized Ontario hospitals tens of millions of dollars since 1984 and continues to cost the Ottawa Hospital between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per day."

It's signed by 16,000 people from all over Ottawa-Carleton and eastern Ontario and I'm pleased to submit it to you.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I have a petition on behalf of parents, children and the entire community of the George Anderson Public School and the Dennis Avenue Community School.

"Whereas Mike Harris is cutting the heart out of many communities by closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario; and

"Whereas this massive number of school closings all at once will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely; and

"Whereas Mike Harris is pitting parent against parent and community against community in the fight to save local schools; and

"Whereas parents and students in the city of Toronto and many other communities across Ontario are calling on the government to stop closing so many of their schools;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Mike Harris stop closing local schools."

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I'm submitting this petition on behalf of my colleague the member for St George-St David. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

1500

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is no dialysis available in the Cornwall area; and

"Whereas this lack of medical treatment forces dialysis patients throughout Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and beyond to drive to Ottawa or Kingston several times each week, even during dangerous winter driving conditions, to receive the basic medical attention and, at the same time, incurring unnecessary stress, cost and inconvenience; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health promised on April 24, 1996, to rectify this medical shortfall by establishing a dialysis treatment facility in Cornwall; and

"Whereas the promise made by the Minister of Health has to date not been kept, resulting in local patients and their family and friends driving to Ottawa or Kingston for treatment several times per week, during the above-noted conditions;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that the health minister follows through on the commitment made last April to set up this long-awaited and much-needed health service for Cornwall area residents."

That's signed by many constituents from SD&G.

APPRENTICESHIP LEGISLATION

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I have a petition that's signed by hundreds of people like Robert Byrne, Mark Delisle and Thomas Squire. It is in opposition to Bill 55 and it expresses the views of over 250 people who showed up to demonstrate against the government's reforms to the Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. This is a petition against Bill 55 and I agree with the sentiments expressed in this petition. This is an undertaking that the government should scrap Bill 55 and go back to the drawing board and have meaningful consultation and come through with legislation —

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): This is petition time. Are you reading the petition?

Mr Lessard: — that will benefit those who are affected by apprenticeship —

The Acting Speaker: Petitions?

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I've received more petitions from a group called RATH, Residents Against Tax Hikes. It's entitled, "Freeze Taxes and Restructure Government."

"Whereas the Haldimand-Norfolk region has down-loaded a 17% tax hike on residents, without attempting to cut its own costs; and

"Whereas for the past 25 years, there have been meetings, petitions, referenda, and studies calling for a restructuring of regional government; and

"Whereas 80% of the residents did not want regional government in the first place, and in recent referenda, 75% of the residents of the city of Nanticoke, and 60% of the residents of the town of Simcoe voted against retaining regional government; and

"Whereas residents in the region do not want and clearly cannot afford two levels of municipal government;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that provincial legislation be passed to freeze taxes and eliminate regional government in Haldimand-Norfolk, and institute a form of restructured local government in keeping with the wishes and the financial means of the local residents."

I sign these petitions.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition which has been entitled, "Say No to the Privatization of Health Care."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario;

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale;

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario;

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not privatize our health care services."

I'm pleased to join a number of people in my riding on Felix Avenue, Sun Valley, Campbell, Redwood, Chapel and add my name to the petition.

ADOPTION

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have here a petition signed by residents of Nepean, Ottawa, Gloucester, Munster, Stittsville and Kanata. It has to do with their support for Bill 39, the Access to Adoption Information Statute Law Amendment Act. I will simply summarize the petition.

They are in support of legislation that would allow access to birth registration and adoption records for an adult adoptee's birth parents, adoptive parents and other relatives; implement a no-contact notice option; recommend optional counselling; offer access to other information and acknowledge open adoptions.

I sign my name to it.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): Provincial government Bill 99:

"With regard to this Bill 99, we do not agree with the decision to remove compensation from volunteer workers. Living in the country, as most of us do, we are particularly concerned with the volunteer firefighters who give so much to their community. We understand them having to withdraw from the volunteer firefighters. We would most likely feel the same way if we knew that there was no protection for us if we were injured while providing a vital service to the community. We would like to think that the government will be able to come up with a solution which will be in everybody's best interests.

"The undersigned members of the Hawkstone Women's Institute will agree that there should be changes made to Bill 99 to enable these volunteer workers to continue to serve the community without worrying about the possible consequences of being injured."

I have signed that on behalf of those people.

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region;

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional

health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology;

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services;

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres;

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement.

GERMAN HERITAGE

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I have yet another petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of German descent have been a part of Ontario's history since the days of pre-Confederation; and

"Whereas the German culture has always been an integral component of the cultural mosaic of Ontario; and

"Whereas we wish to demonstrate official recognition of the positive contribution of German heritage in the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass the bill entitled the German Pioneers Day Act and we respectfully petition the government of Ontario to designate the day following Thanksgiving Day as the date of the annual German Pioneers Day."

This is signed by over 100 people from Toronto and I affix my signature.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas heritage is vitally important to the social and economic health of Ontario communities and Ontario residents; and

"Whereas community museums, galleries and heritage organizations work hard to protect, promote, manage and develop our provincial heritage resources; and

"Whereas the provincial government has a responsibility to the people of Ontario to promote the value of heritage and heritage conservation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has abdicated their responsibility for heritage by cutting support to

community museums, galleries and heritage organizations; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not implemented a new heritage act that would give communities the ability to provide better protection for heritage sites; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not undertaken meaningful consultation with Ontario's heritage community;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide stronger support to Ontario's heritage institutions and organizations and to work with the people of Ontario to establish a new heritage act."

This is signed by many people on Baby, Peter, Bouffard, Dugald and many other streets in my riding. I'd like to ask Brendan to come in here and get on the television so his mother can see him. He's going to bring this petition over to the Speaker's table.

1510

OPPOSITION DAY

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I move that, in the opinion of this House, since Dalton McGuinty has been talking to children like Carlos who was afraid that his little sister was going to lose her daycare, and Amanda who is making bracelets to try to save her school, and Anne who asked why Mike Harris is being so mean and closing her school; and

Since Mike Harris has refused to consult with parents on the future of their neighbourhood school; and

Since Mike Harris is pitting parent against parent and community against community in the fight to save local schools; and

Since Mike Harris short-changed school boards by over \$150 million, making it impossible to keep schools open; and

Since Mike Harris is now blaming school boards and using them as scapegoats for his government's disastrous and chaotic funding formula; and

Since Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely;

Therefore, the Mike Harris government should stop closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Mrs McLeod has moved opposition day number 4. Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: I'm pleased we're going to have some debate in this Legislature today around this absolutely disastrous school closure policy which has been foisted on the province as a result of this government's decision to take over 100% of the control of the funding of education.

I suspect that when the government members rise to speak today they will want to — I don't know if you can talk about trumpeting the sounding of the bugles of retreat, but I think they're certainly going to want to say: "Well, you know, we made some movement last week. We've changed some of the ground rules." I think it's important that we have this debate today to make it absolutely clear that the government did not do what it proudly announced about a week ago. It did not do what the Premier said it would do: ensure that no school in Ontario would close. I wish that were the case, I wish the government had taken those steps, but that is clearly not what took place when the government made some changes in its policy about a week ago.

What the government did was clearly to buy, or attempt to buy, some political peace until after the next provincial election. Parents know that. School trustees know that. Anybody who has been watching knows how rigidly the government stuck to its disastrous formula until they were forced by public pressure to at least take some step backwards, not because they were concerned about students, not because they heard the concerns of children like Carlos, Amanda or Anne, not because they recognized that their policy was a disaster, but simply because they got a bad poll result. They discovered that they weren't going to be able to simply bully this through, let the chips fall where they may, take their money and run, because when they ran in the next election, they would be defeated on this issue, so they decided they'd better take a modest step back in order to protect their political hides until after that election campaign could be fought.

But there was something interesting in what the Premier said when he made this announcement, when he in fact rushed back from Thunder Bay, where he was supposed to be making announcements about all the wonderful jobs the government has supposedly created, even though we know they're well short of the number of jobs they promised to create. He rushed back from Thunder Bay to make this announcement, and what was interesting about it was that the Premier of Ontario finally acknowledged that it is his government's funding formula that was indeed forcing about 600 schools across this province to close. It's the first time that he has been forced to acknowledge that it was the funding formula. You'll remember that in every question that has been asked in this Legislature, the minister and the Premier have been at pains to say: "We're not closing schools; it's school boards. Our formula has nothing to do with this." We all know that was so far from the truth that it was not to be believed by anybody, and finally the Premier himself acknowledged that they had created a mess which they then had to fix.

I think it's important that we remember the reality of what this government was doing. I still find it almost inconceivable, so to remind us of what they set out to do last spring seems almost to be unreal, but it's fact. They brought out a funding formula that basically dictated that hundreds and hundreds of schools across Ontario would have to shut down. They simply weren't going to be

funded; the spaces weren't going to be funded. The government cut the maintenance budget so that the spaces weren't going to be funded.

That was, in and of itself, something of a shocker. But what was even more unbelievable was that this government wanted all of those so-called empty spaces to be shut down by last June 30. This was April. The boards didn't even know how much surplus space the government was going to tell them they had, but they wanted all the surplus space shut down by June 30. That was in the written statements that came out when the funding formula was released.

If anybody has ever been involved in the closure of a school, you know how much anguish that creates for parents and students. Every school board that has carried out a school closure — indeed, I think every school board has had to carry out some school closures because of declining enrolment or a shift in the population. They know how difficult it is. There is at least a year built into every process for the closure of a school — a year for every school. The way this government had set out the process, it looked as though there were going to be about three schools closing a day, with no opportunity for any kind of consultation with parents or students. Parents and students clearly said that they weren't going to stand for that, and we knew they wouldn't stand for that.

But let there be no doubt that what this government's formula was forcing was the closure of over 600 schools. It was all in theory, it was all bottom lines, but all you had to do was take the government's own bottom lines, their figures that showed how much surplus space each board had and divide it, and you knew how many schools were going to have to close. We said at the time that they couldn't close that many schools. Boards couldn't do it, the public would not stand for it, boards would not wreak that kind of havoc on their students and on their school system, so the boards would not do it. We saw board after board say: "We are going to defy what this government is requiring that we do. Even if it costs us, we're going to defy this government, because we will not shut down all of these schools in all these communities."

What this government wanted was to have every school 100% full, a child in every corner. It would have created an overcrowding situation which is beyond imagining. Not only did they want every single space filled, but they didn't want to allow any space for things like art rooms in either elementary or secondary schools, they didn't want to have computer studies rooms, they didn't want family studies rooms, they didn't want any science laboratories; they thought there should be at least 22 students in a science lab taking classes every moment of the day. They didn't want music rooms. Maybe that fits with what this government thinks is important in terms of a classroom education. Music rooms and art rooms and family studies rooms certainly weren't part of what was going to be allowed as space for students — not part of their definition of "classroom."

Then the government said: "No, community use doesn't count either. You can have some child care. Maybe we

won't force you to close the spaces that small children are now in, in their daycare settings, but if you want to keep those daycare settings open, you're going to have to charge them full market rent, because we're not going to pay the boards anything to heat and light and clean the spaces where they have the child care." That effectively shuts child care down — still does. The government didn't make any changes in that last week. They didn't make any changes in whether they were prepared to provide extra maintenance costs so that there could be community use of schools of any kind. They've simply said no to community use of schools. In fact, there is some polling they're doing right now, because this government runs on polls, and one of the questions they're asking is, "Do you think it would be all right, if you want your school used for community purposes, to charge the municipality, to get the municipality to pay to keep your school open for community use?" That, mark my words, is this government's next step, but it won't come until after the next election. Let's hope they're not in a position to implement the next steps in this incredible agenda.

The government extended from June 30 to December 31 their deadline for closure of all these schools, to have a plan in place and have the schools closed by next June. It's important to remember, though, that although they extended the time, they didn't extend the funding to keep them open. This is very much like what the government did to hospitals. Remember when they took the \$800 million away from hospital budgets before they had done any restructuring in the hospital system? They were basically forcing hospitals to restructure because they had already taken their funds away, creating a crisis that necessitates a response, exactly what they were doing to school boards. As of September 1 this year, they took out all of the maintenance funding for these extra spaces, forcing the school boards into a position where, whether or not they thought it was good for their kids, they were going to have to close schools or run a deficit situation.

That did not change with this government's announcements last week. Boards are still not getting funding to maintain their school space. There's some flexibility built in: You don't have to have them 100% occupied now, only 80%, and that is a small step in the right direction. But you've still got to shut down the schools, because you're not getting any money to heat, light and clean what this government has decided is non-essential or extra space. There is no question that schools are still going to have to close.

This government would now like to believe that they've set up a situation where, because Mike Harris has said that no school will have to close, any school board that is forced to close a school by the funding formula will be at fault this time, because after all, Mike changed the disastrous rules they had in place at first and he said, "No school will have to close." Therefore, if a school closes, it must be the board's fault. Wrong. The funding formula is still going to drive school closures, because the maintenance money to keep the spaces open is not there, because there's no money for community use of schools unless

they can find some community agency or Brownie group or Scout group that can actually pay market rent for the use of the school space.

1520

When Dalton McGuinty travelled across Toronto and other parts of the province visiting schools, he came back and said, "I didn't see a single space that wasn't full." It's not as though all of these spaces were empty. They had students in them. Sometimes they weren't as full as the government thinks they should be, but they had students using the space and they had community groups using the space. This government doesn't want to make any allowance for that. If it doesn't fit the formula, it's got to go.

This government has also created a situation in which they are pitting parents and students in one area against parents and students in another area, and that did not change with this government's so-called retreat from a disastrous policy. It is a simple fact that if a board has any space which the government considers is extra space, they've got to get rid of all of that space across all of the new amalgamated boards. They've got to get rid of all of that so-called extra space before this government will allow them to build a single new school or create a single new space for students in another community where there may be increasing enrolment. This is creating truly unfortunate situations.

If the government was really going to listen to the concerns of parents that have been voiced to an unbelievable level over the last week, surely they would have understood that what they had to do was uncouple the decisions about how much space they would pay for to keep clean and the need of school boards to create new spaces in communities where there is enrolment growth. In fact, this government's not prepared to flow a single cent of money to any board for the creation of any new spaces in any community where there's increasing student enrolment until all the schools have been shut down that this funding formula is going to force to close.

School closures are difficult at any time. They are an anguish. I personally have been involved in the closure of some 12 schools. There wasn't a single one that didn't create anguish for the parents, for the students and indeed for the school trustees involved. But at no point were those school closures being driven by an arbitrary, inflexible funding formula that was developed in Queen's Park and imposed on school boards across the province. We weren't dealing with huge amalgamated boards where it was quite clear that the needs in one area were going to be totally different from the needs in another area. This is a very different kind of school closure being driven by Queen's Park and no place else, totally unresponsive to the needs of a local community or the students in a particular school. It is being driven by a cost-cutting agenda pure and simple.

This government's agenda was, first of all, to cut money out of education. That's why they wanted control of the funding. When public pressure said: "We don't want any more cuts. What happened to your promise not to cut classroom education?" they said, "All right, we

won't cut any more money. We'll keep the funding stable for three years, except that over the next three years there will be 85,000 more students being funded with that same amount of money, less money for every student."

What does the government do? They cut money out of maintenance because they consider it non-essential. I would like to say loudly and clearly today that having a heated, lit, clean, safe space in which to learn is an essential part of providing a classroom education to a student. You can't cut the kind of giant corners that this government wants to cut and claim you're providing a quality education.

The government may have hoped to buy political peace for a year, but I don't think it's going to work. That's why 300 people were out at Weston Memorial school last night to say they don't believe this government is really going to put in place a formula that allows their school to stay open. They don't trust this government. But at least there will be some deferrals. Boards were already doing that, deferring it in the hope that after the next election there will be a new government and a sane policy put in place. I'm glad there can be deferrals until after the next election campaign. I'm glad the government feels it's necessary to buy some political peace for at least a year, because at least it means that all those schools will not be shut down.

This government's agenda, we know, is to do as much damage as possible and to make it as irreversible as possible so no future government can undo what they have done. That has been said publicly and clearly. In this case, they were stopped by an aroused, concerned public — a small step for democracy. Let's hope that we can change the government so that we can have sane, responsive policies that really do show a concern for students' needs and for the need of a school in every community.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I rise today to join in this debate on this opposition day motion presented by Mrs McLeod on behalf of the Liberal caucus and to express my support and that of our caucus for the motion. Essentially the motion, while I would have liked it to go further than it does, indicates very clearly that the Mike Harris government should stop closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario. We certainly support that notion.

We have seen across the province, Speaker — I have seen it in my own west-end Toronto community and I know you have seen it in your part of the city of Toronto in the Riverdale area — the many schools that have been, and still are, under threat of closure directly because of the new funding formula that Mike Harris and his government have imposed upon school board after school board across this province. We have seen a situation, as I was saying, right across the province. In my own community, 22 public and Catholic schools that were going through the review were on the chopping block. I suspect a number of them will still be going through the review and under threat of closure, because although there has been a suspension of the immediate threat of those schools closing as a result of the steps the government was forced to take, at

least on the Catholic side, the overall threat is still far from gone.

We know what Mike Harris was forced to do after they put out the initial formula, realizing and having to admit that it was going to cause the closure of many schools; 167 public and Catholic schools in the city of Toronto alone, 22 of those in my own west-end community, schools that have been functioning and continue to function to provide not only good education for our students and for our children but provide many more services. In fact, many of those schools act as the centre of the neighbourhoods. They provide child care centres, they provide services to seniors, they provide English-as-a-second-language classes for adults. They have become, in effect, the hub of the community. They are as valuable for the adults and the rest of the community as they are valuable for the children and the students who attend those schools on a day-to-day basis.

Over the last number of weeks, Speaker, I have been, as I know you and others have, to many meetings across our own areas and across the city in which group after group of parents was beginning to understand — not just beginning but is finally understanding — what the impact of the Harris funding formula means. Many of those people have not been dissuaded or persuaded by the second-line attempts that Mike Harris and his government have made to come in and seem like they're rescuing the situation from the decisions of the school boards. I think the school boards, both public and Catholic, certainly here in the city of Toronto, have acted very responsibly in telling people what would happen if the Harris funding formula remained as it was and what is going to happen if it still remains as it is.

While there has now been a suspension on the Catholic board side, saying, "We don't have to make decisions over this next year," even there, there hasn't been a clear decision taken by the board yet with respect to saying what will happen two years from now or a year and a half from now. Certainly on the public board side, we know there will be at least 30 schools that will still potentially be on the chopping block. People may say: "It used to be 127 and that's gone down to 30. Isn't that great?" Well, it's better, but when you have 30 schools in a city like Toronto that are still in danger of closing, I don't know what the government has to be proud of. In fact, 30 schools will mean that 30 neighbourhoods, 30 communities will lose a vital part of the services that we provide to our young people and, as I said, to the rest of the neighbourhood.

As parents across the city and in my own riding of Dovercourt have said, they don't want to see any of these schools close. I think the government has to understand that and they've got to find whatever way they want to find to continue to back off this incredibly stupid and harsh funding formula that takes money out of the classroom. It does exactly what the Harris government said they were not going to do: It takes money out of schools, money out of classrooms, and it forces school boards to have to close schools.

1530

We need to have this discussion be about services, be about children, be about students, be about the many other people who receive services from our schools. But at the end of the day, this discussion comes back to a discussion around money. We know that at the heart of what Harris and what his government are doing is the taking out of our system of education of hundreds of millions of dollars, just as they have done out of our health care system.

That money in large part is going to fund an income tax cut that makes no sense whatsoever if you are among average middle-income or working-income families. It makes a lot of sense, I suppose, if you're earning \$100,000 or more. Then you're getting some benefit. But if you're like the rest of us, if you're like that vast majority, that 94% of people across the province who make less than \$80,000, then what you are seeing as a result of the Mike Harris actions is cut after cut in some of our most vital services. Today we are addressing one of those: our school system and our schools and our children and our students.

It behooves all of us who stand here in this House and say that we abhor what Mike Harris and his government are doing with respect to education funding to also be clear about what our commitment is if we were the government. That's why I'm proud of the position that we as New Democrats have taken, which is not just to oppose what Mike Harris is doing. If you have any sense of what's going on in our system, how could you not oppose what Mike Harris is doing? That's almost the easy part, to stand up and say you disagree strongly with what Mike Harris is doing. The more difficult part is to talk about what you would do instead.

I want to say to my Liberal colleagues that when they, like us, talk about what they would do, I still need to hear very clearly where it is they would come first of all with respect to a clear commitment to provide the funding that needs to be made. Let's not be fooled. We are asking parents and others not to be fooled by the interim changes Harris has made, to say, "We're going to put in a bit more money now into the system." We have no guarantee that those additional funds they are putting back are not simply there as a way to patch them through to the next election, hoping they'll get re-elected and then can reintroduce those cuts. That's what many parents out there are fearing. It behooves those of us in the opposition who want to replace the Mike Harris government to say to people that not only is our commitment clear, sharp, simple, that we will put back into the education system the money that Mike Harris has taken out, but it's also incumbent on us to explain very clearly to people where that money is going to come from. It's not going to fall from the skies. It's not going to just magically materialize out of money that will come out of growth in the economy. Undoubtedly there will be some if the economy continues to grow, but who can guarantee today that that will be the case?

That's why I am proud of the position we have taken as New Democrats. Not only will we put the hundreds of millions of dollars back into the education system that

Mike Harris and his government have taken out, but we would roll back that portion of the tax cut that goes to people making over \$80,000, that 6% of taxpayers who get a billion and a half of the benefit of that tax cut. Twenty-five per cent of the value of the tax cut goes to that very small portion. We would put that money back into our education system, back into our health care system, because that's the way in which we are guaranteed that that money can be there and that the commitment we are making actually means something.

I want to say to my Liberal colleagues, it's great to hear them ranting against what Mike Harris is doing and it's great to hear them opposing what Mike Harris is doing. It's also time they come forward with ways in which they are going to put the money where their commitment is and explain to the people of Ontario how these commitments are going to be paid for.

We've done that. We're going to continue to do that and we're going to continue not only to oppose what Mike Harris is doing, but to talk very clearly and in clearer and clearer terms about what the alternatives are because the alternatives are there. We're proud and firm in our position in terms of how we would change not only what Mike Harris is doing, but in fact put the money back that has to be put back and put that back in a way that benefits all of us and not just simply the wealthiest citizens in our province.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm very pleased to speak on behalf of the government with respect to this opposition day motion brought forth by the member from Thunder Bay. I'd just like to say that I'm proud of the job this government has done in education, and continues to do.

One of the focuses of this motion speaks about dollars for the education system, about the funding formula and classroom spending. It's obvious that this government is spending more money than it ever has with respect to the education system. The amount of money going into education is going to be close to \$15 billion. I know the minister has been working very hard, and I think he has done an excellent job with respect to managing the ministry, in not only trying to make it responsive to the needs of the public but also trying to shape it in such a manner that what we're going to have is an education system that is not only accountable but also brings forth the provincial standards in education that I know, as a parent, I want for my children.

I know that people out there with school-age children want provincial standards. They want provincial involvement to make sure that the system is not only functioning in terms of their being heard but also that it's a very good education system in terms of what we're trying to accomplish. Those provincial standards, which I see no mention of in this opposition day motion — because quite frankly it's obvious that the Liberal Party and even the NDP accept the principle that there should be provincial standards in our education system — those provincial standards that we've brought forth are based on a standardized curriculum where your child can be in one

part of the province and, if you have to leave to go to another part of the province for whatever reason, they're not going to be put behind the eight ball in terms of their learning capability.

That provincial standard with respect to a standardized curriculum, with respect to math and English, has been brought forth with respect to the elementary school system. I know that's a welcome change in terms of the chaotic, if you want to use the word "chaotic," approach that school boards have been using in how they teach English, how they teach math across the province. We have to have standards.

We also have standardized testing which allows us to get feedback not only on how we're doing from a parent-child point of view but also on how we're doing school board against school board across the province and how we're doing on a provincial basis against the rest of the country, and also on an international basis.

What is the problem with respect to having standardized testing, making sure that we have provincial standards to know where we're going with our education system? The bottom line is, no matter how much money you spend on education, you want to make sure that you're getting a valued product, you want to make sure that you're getting a good education for the people who are a part of that education system.

We also brought in a standardized report card, we brought in equal funding — that's a big area, equal funding per student across the province — and I also want to speak to special education funding.

The bottom line is, in a riding such as mine, Simcoe Centre, which is one of the fastest-growing areas across the province, it is critical that we get fair funding because we have the need in terms of increased student population and also the need to have more elementary and secondary schools. That's the big debate in my riding: Are we going to get a fair funding formula from the province to recognize the needs of this growing area? I believe this province has answered that need.

It's obvious that in terms of what our funding per student was before the change in the funding formula, we were far behind, for example, the Metropolitan Toronto school system. I'm talking thousands and thousands of dollars per year per student. Quite frankly, as a parent, I can't see why every student in this province isn't given the same opportunity in terms of monetary support for them to get an education.

This equal funding that we've brought forth is a tremendous equalizer across the province in providing a fair and equitable education system. That, coupled with our provincial standards, puts in place an education system that not only is fair but also is consistent across the board. I think in terms of education we have to have those criteria of provincial standards and also equal funding across the board.

1540

Also speaking in terms of the fairness of funding, now we see that the Catholic school system has equitable funding in comparison to the public school system. One

thing that was brought in when Bill Davis was in government and now has been brought forth through this government, through Bill 160, is equal funding for the separate school system. That has certainly been welcome news. This government, through the Bill Davis years and through this present government, has always been fair to the separate school system. Obviously, I can't say the same for the other parties.

But I will say that the government's focus has been to put people first in terms of how we've gone about fixing government. With respect to education, what we have done is put students first. When they talk about classroom spending, what we have done is made sure that classroom spending goes into the classroom. You can't shift around in terms of saying, "We're going to move funds from this account into that account." What we have mandated is that there is spending that goes into classroom spending and non-classroom spending.

But also we've made sure in terms of the funding that we've provided for special education, which is \$1.2 billion, that that funding cannot be taken away and put into administration. Because that's the big argument that we face and that we've heard from parents, saying: "You know, if you're going to put money into education we want it to be in the classroom, we want it to be in special education. We do not want to see it continuing to be put into administration."

It was very interesting when last week we had a big discussion in Simcoe Centre about the need for high schools. We have a tremendous need for high schools in the city of Barrie and the town of Innisfil. What we're trying to accomplish is, because of the tremendous growth through our funding formula, we're looking to fast-track the building of schools in areas that need them. As I said, we have a tremendous need, and I was very pleased to see last week that the public school board has approved the location of two new high schools, one in the city of Barrie in the Holly area and one in the town of Innisfil located in Alcona Beach. There is a tremendous need for that type of building, and I am going to do my best as the member for Simcoe Centre to make sure not only that those schools are built but that they're built in the most expeditious manner that they can be built.

The bottom line is that the tremendous growth that's being experienced outside of Metropolitan Toronto has to be given the same time in terms of the debate. We cannot continue to focus on Metropolitan Toronto in terms of their needs versus the needs of the rest of the province. From what I understand, in Metropolitan Toronto they have at the public board level 330,000 student spaces and the number of students who are actually in the system is roughly around 200,000, so obviously they have excess capacity. The challenge to the boards is to deal with that.

My challenge as the member for Simcoe Centre is that we don't have enough schools. We have excess number of students because, quite frankly, people are moving out of Toronto to come up and live in my area, and I don't blame them because it's a tremendous area to live in. But that's the reality which has been happening for the last 10 years.

I would say that what we're looking at is a fairness in terms of equity for all the regions. In terms of my area, in the last two weeks we've opened three new elementary schools, two in the separate system and one in the public system. Those schools are almost at capacity right now. So we can't look with tunnel vision in terms of, "What are Toronto's problems versus the rest of the province?"

Let's look outside of Toronto in terms of the problems in other areas. For too long, in my area we've been getting short-changed in terms of fairness in education dollars. That's why bringing in provincial standards in terms of the building of schools with respect to equal and fair funding by students, and not by the area you live in, is going to provide equal opportunity and fairness to the residents of Simcoe Centre.

Putting more money in the classroom, taking waste out of administration and focusing on clear, high standards for our children and our schools is exactly the kind of change Ontarians asked for in the election. I can remember running in 1995 and having meeting after meeting with parents, saying, "We have to fix our education system. We have to make sure we have the schools available when we need them. We have to make sure the parents have some input in their child's education." People wanted provincial standards. That's what we gave them.

I'd like to ask the Liberals once and for all to stop promoting misconceptions about this government's policies and stop trying to provoke the public. That's essentially what they're trying to do. They've been working very well with the trade unions in trying to accomplish this goal with the disruptions that have been occurring throughout not only York region, but Simcoe county and in Metropolitan Toronto.

This government has not closed one school. This government is spending more money on education than ever has been done in the history of this province. That is the Liberal Party that for the first time ever voted against back-to-school legislation. They say they are fighting for students, yet they voted against allowing them back to school, even though they've always supported such legislation in the past.

They put forth as one of their major platforms that they want to get rid of Bill 160. What does that mean? Are you going to make sure that the Catholic school system is not going to have fair and equitable funding? Are you going to take away parents' rights to be involved in parents' councils? We've enshrined that in legislation. Are you going to get rid of provincial standards in terms of making sure class sizes are at a certain level? Are you going to get rid of provincial standards in terms of having teachers spend more time in the classroom? What are they going to do? Are they going to basically break the framework of providing provincial standards in education that all people want?

We have to wait to see what they want. It's easy to say, "We're going to get rid of the bill," but when you have no platform to say what you're going to do to strengthen and improve education in this province, and what it's going to

cost in terms of disruption to the system — I think it's up to the Liberal Party to explain what they're about.

Not too long ago, the Liberals were proclaiming that we were going to fire 10,000 teachers. Not only was this completely not true, but now schools can't seem to hire enough teachers. That's what I've heard throughout my riding: "We need more teachers." That's attributable somewhat to the tremendous growth that's happening in my riding, but it's also attributable to the fact that a number of teachers who were of retirement age took advantage of it. That was their right, to take advantage of early retirement. You can't blame them because the teachers' pension plan is obviously one of the richest in the province. Who wouldn't want to retire at age 55, making a significant amount of money in excess of \$50,000 a year towards their pension? That's a good lifestyle.

Why has the Liberal Party taken the stand it has with respect to the education reforms? We put in place limits on average class size, and as a result boards need to hire more teachers. Then they claimed that 600 schools were going to close — a number picked out of thin air — and again the Liberal Party was wrong. In fact, funding is being provided for up to 200 new schools in the next three years. This is not a number picked out of thin air; it is based on grants the Ministry of Education is providing to boards and the ability for this money to be leveraged so that schools can be built when they are needed.

1550

Yes, there are challenges when you move from one formula to a new one, especially when it has decayed since the last update to our education finance system. I know the Liberals would have done nothing. It's easy to put off the tough decisions, but that would have made the problem worse, so the Premier announced some changes to make the funding formula more flexible, to allow it to take into consideration the specific circumstances of rural Ontario and of old schools with special design features, and to give boards some more time to implement the changes properly.

The funding formula is based on the idea that every student deserves an equal chance at life. I think this is a noble idea. To me, it's common sense.

Based on this principle, we have developed a funding formula in which funding follows the children, not the buildings or the staff. That's equal funding for each student. We believe that having funding follow the student is the right thing to do. It's a very straightforward, simplistic way to deal with it. It gets away from the politics of it. Obviously, the members from Metropolitan Toronto would love to make sure they keep all the funding in Metropolitan Toronto, to the detriment of my constituents in Simcoe Centre. Why? Because they've always had it that way. But things have changed, and the bottom line is that people are moving out of Metropolitan Toronto to live somewhere else. If that's the case, let's even the playing field and allow the locations where people are now living to get fair funding for their education system. As I said, we believe that having funding follow the student is the right thing to do.

Within this formula, we have recognized the special circumstances of small and rural schools. Grants for remote and rural schools have more than doubled to \$90.1 million this year, and \$56.2 million has been allocated for small schools in cases of sparse population.

The Premier's changes confirm that no school will need to close as a result of the provincial funding formula. Various boards across the province made suggestions on how to improve the formula and make it more flexible. I know the boards from my riding were involved. It would have been nicer if the boards had worked with us in the first place. We tried to work with them to make sure we addressed their concerns. They are the ones who know the system on the ground level. But some school boards didn't want to work with us. Instead, they just fought the changes. Now that some suggestions have come forward, we have responded with long-term solutions to ensure that no school will need to close as a result of provincial funding changes.

We have brought in a 20% funding top-up for school maintenance budgets. This recognizes the difficulty of keeping all schools at perfect capacity. When funding follows the student, schools which are slightly below capacity would get slightly below funding to maintain the school. The 20% top-up solution removes this concern and will allow many schools, particularly rural schools, to remain open. For example, a school at 89% capacity will get 100% funding for maintenance. A school at 76% capacity will get 96% funding for maintenance.

We also have recognized that some older schools have unique design features, such as larger hallways, which contribute to extra maintenance costs. The funding formula has been changed to accommodate these features.

These are permanent solutions which will benefit boards every year.

Another permanent solution is the removal of the December 31 date to submit school use plans. Boards can now submit plans every year in order to become eligible for funding to build new classrooms. This recognizes the difficulty some boards were having when trying to plan for future years while also managing the transition to the new funding formula. This gives them the time to do their planning properly.

With these permanent solutions, we've addressed key concerns while maintaining our goal of fair funding for every student. Of course, all boards have in the past and will continue to open and close schools as they see appropriate, given enrolment and demographic shifts. People move but buildings don't, but no provincial action will force any additional schools to close.

The same can be said with respect to boundary changes. That's always been something the boards have handled in terms of their policy, and it has to do with the demographics and the necessities of the boards in terms of how they provide their education. The province hadn't been involved in that and the boards have always seemed to manage in terms of dealing with their boundary changes.

In addition to these changes, we've ensured that all boards will have an additional year to find the necessary administrative savings. Boards that were to have phased-in reductions beginning next year will now receive no less than they did this year. Boards that were to receive increases will still receive them. The province is willing to provide outside expert advice to assist in finding administrative savings to boards that request it. The Toronto District School Board requested such assistance and the province is fulfilling this request.

As the Premier often stated in the past, we are invariably committed to our goals, but we are willing to discuss how we will achieve these goals. We have listened to concerns that the school boards have raised and have improved the funding model to make it easier to make them implement the changes. Already boards are indicating that they will not be closing any schools. The Toronto Catholic board was considering 29 and now has indicated that no schools will close. The Toronto District School Board, of course, was waving around their list of 138 schools, but that list has been withdrawn. Even before the Premier's announcement, boards were deciding not to close schools. The Thames Valley board and the Avon Maitland board took their schools off the list.

We continue to be committed to the principle of fair funding for every student in the province, and I know the members of Metropolitan Toronto may find that a hard principle to accept because in the past they basically have been a self-funded board; they haven't needed any assistance from the province and they basically have been able to do what they wish. But in the new era where we have a system where there should be provincial standards, where every student in this province should get the same amount of money for their education, and because the province has decided to take a role to ensure that every student in this province has fair and equitable funding, I guess Metropolitan Toronto is going to have to go along. I would say, as the member for Simcoe Centre, that that's something they should accept the reality of and get down to the business of providing a quality education in this city.

We continue to be committed to the principle of fair funding for every student in the province. I'm proud of the accomplishments of this government. I want an education system where my children can get the best possible education, and the efforts of this government will go a long way to putting Ontario students back in the lead.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate. The member for —

1600

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Essex South. Gee, it's not my day. The other Speaker had me in Essex-Kent. But after the next election I hope it's in Essex.

I'm pleased to stand today to speak for a few minutes on this resolution. The crux of the resolution is, "The Mike Harris government should stop closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario." The member for Wentworth North just asked a few minutes ago that we help clear up the issue of what this government is doing, and I'd be pleased to do that. This

government goes around saying, "It's not us." It's like hospitals. It's like when they sent out the hospital restructuring commission: "It's not us closing hospitals, it's somebody else." They like to put the blame on somebody else. We don't have to clear up an awful lot for people, because they know that it's this government's flawed funding formula, the original one. I hope it's not like the tax bills, where we'll have seven funding formulas before we even get close to getting it right. The public knows that it's Mike Harris whose hand is on the door, that pulls the school door closed. He may not take responsibility for it, but it's his fingerprints that are on the doorknobs of those schools that are going to close.

Several months ago our leader, Dalton McGuinty, came to Harrow, a rural school, a community of just a couple of thousand people. At that time, the government was standing up and saying they finally had the guts to do what nobody else would do: establish a funding formula that was fair across the province. We know that today they're standing up and saying: "We saw the light. We now have a new funding formula that's fair for everybody across the province." I don't think they have it right yet.

I want to speak for just a couple of minutes on behalf of Harrow secondary school and Western Secondary School, two rural secondary schools which were under the threat of being closed just several weeks ago. There was also W.D. Lowe Secondary School, John L. Forster, Walkerville and Century in Windsor — different communities, different schools, different reasons for being there and different reasons why they should stay where they are. But since Harrow and Western are in my riding, I'd like to specifically talk about them.

For the government to come along and say: "OK, we've seen the light now. You in the Liberal Party have been telling us for months that the funding formula that we developed, that was fair for everybody in Ontario, was wrong" — I ask the member for Wentworth North if this will help clarify it. The government now says, "Yes, you were right and we were wrong." Is the member for Wentworth North saying then that's not the opposition's job, to point out when something we feel is wrong is genuinely wrong? We did that. Now the government is standing up and making apologies for it.

The problem is that Harrow secondary school and Western Secondary School are still under that threat, because I suggest that in stepping back from that line that they so boldly stepped up to in the first place and told all of us, "We're right," Mike Harris is saying, "Elect me this year and I'll close them next year." It's the same mind that's in Mike Harris's head. It's the same heart that he has, and sometimes I think it's a pretty cold one. It's the same ideology and philosophy that are there. But they're saying, "Just wait a year and then we'll close your schools." I think that's all this dance is about. I still think they're going to be back there next year with the same ideas, the same philosophy, the same bottom line, and they're going to forget about rural schools and continue along this line that they started on to take the guts out of

some of our communities. That's why I'm supporting this resolution today.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I'm pleased to join this debate on this opposition day motion and the be-it-resolved section that says here, "The Mike Harris government should stop closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario." Indeed, this is the heritage of Bill 160, the very controversial piece of legislation that the government went forward with to centralize all decision-making with respect to education across Ontario. Not only are tax levies being dictated through the back halls of the government offices here without debate before the Legislature affecting property tax across Ontario, but class size, whether schools stay open, how schools should be managed, right down to the tiniest detail are coming out of Toronto: One size fits all. Somehow, the people who work in the backrooms here and the government party itself seem to believe that this piece of legislation that allows them to set the accommodation formula — in other words, that says a school must operate at 100% capacity, that every school in the province must operate at 100% capacity before any money will be let go for new communities that require new facilities to accommodate them. That's what this government is saying, "You cannot build a new school unless that school board has exhausted every complete single space."

As a matter of fact, the announcement that was made last week only extended the timeline for this process but did not address the meat of the unreasonableness and unrealistic character, quality of the government's accommodation formula. That's why we have this debate here, in the hope that the government will hear not only from the parents who have spoken out against this, the community associations that have spoken out against this, municipalities now speaking out against this, but also from their elected representatives here in the Ontario Legislature.

Let me give you the example of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board and the French-language school boards, the new boards that were created by this government's initiative. Here we are dealing with school boards that represent 11 municipalities in Ottawa-Carleton. These are urban, suburban, rural municipalities encompassing over 700,000 people.

In Ottawa-Carleton the urban core is separated from the suburban and rural core by the greenbelt. So we have some 300 schools, some 11 municipalities inside the greenbelt, which is totally built out, and outside the greenbelt, which continues to grow, and the government is saying: "For those new schools outside the greenbelt, miles and miles away from the urban core, in order to get that, if you happen to have one or two or three classrooms that are empty in your school that might be used as a withdrawal room for kids with special needs or might be used for some community activity" — it may be a school that was built in 1950 for 500 kids and you've got 450 kids there — "you're going to have to close some of that space. Of course, you can't close down the classroom, oh no. You're going to have to close schools to ensure that

there's no vacant space to deal with that school that's outside the greenbelt that has 40 portables."

Forty per cent of the pupils in schools in the suburban and rural communities outside the greenbelt in Ottawa-Carleton are in portables. That is shameful. Their needs should be addressed independent of the whole notion of dealing with the amalgamation, independent of this whole notion of trying to find more efficient use of space. These kids in portables outside the greenbelt should have their needs addressed today. They should not be held hostage to the fact that there may or may not be some kind of space available inside the urban core.

Let's talk about the space that's supposedly available inside the urban core. I've been a trustee in the Ottawa Board of Education. We've gone through declining enrolment and have made school closure decisions based on programs. We have a history, and it's very clear to us that the community values tremendously having their school in their community, and so they should, because it's more than just a place to educate children, certainly more than that. It's an opportunity for the community to gather, it's an opportunity for the community to use all the facilities, whether it's the gym inside or the baseball diamond outside or what have you.

We're dealing with a change in policy. Up to now, the ministry policy for capacity was about 85%. If your school was at 85% full it was deemed, "OK, you're doing well." That made sense, because communities change. We have communities that grow, we have communities that age. You cannot budget for a one-to-one relationship between capacity and student population. It just doesn't work that way; it's totally unreasonable.

When we look at the application of this government policy of 100% capacity, in Ottawa-Carleton, out of our 300 or so schools, we're going to see something in the order of 40 to 50 schools being closed, not because of programs, not because they're too small, but because that's what's needed to ensure that there is no excess capacity in the system in order to put into place the 10 to 12 new schools that are required today outside the greenbelt. The Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board says it could open five schools tomorrow and have them filled outside the greenbelt, and it's the same story from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. They could fill them tomorrow.

As a matter of fact, if you were to go out to Barrhaven or to Longfields or to Stittsville or Goulbourn and build a school in anticipation of future growth, because that is where the growth is going to be in Ottawa-Carleton, and you oversize, you cannot build another school again, whether it's in Gloucester or in Manotick or any other part of Ottawa-Carleton. You cannot, because you've created this excess capacity. It is truly unreasonable, absolutely unreasonable.

Let's look at the whole notion of the definition of classrooms. Here you have classrooms that are defined at 23 students in high school, 25 students at the elementary level and nine students for special education. But there go the withdrawal rooms, if you're in a French immersion school,

for English education, or, if you're in an English education school, for French immersion. There go the withdrawal rooms for special education. Yes, you have nine for the special education class, but if you have to take a child or two or three children out to deal with their special needs, that's counted as 23 or 25; that's not counted in the system. If you have a computer lab that takes up 18 to 25 of those student spots, that's a classroom. Well, I'm sorry, that's not how the world works.

1610

The educators are telling us that it's unreasonable and unmanageable. The parents are telling us that it is a cruel death stroke to that part of the community fabric that is so important to them, to be able to walk their kids to school. The municipalities are telling us that it confounds all their plans for reviving the urban core and for dealing with growth outside the greenbelt. What the community is telling us, and this government with this announcement — quite frankly, it is so cynical what has happened here. The pressure was on, the communities were going up in flames over the government policy, the accommodation formula, and the government said: "Well, all right, we won't make you decide by the end of December this year. We'll give you more time." But the unreasonableness, the basic, fundamental flaw in this policy still remains, and it has got to change.

So I say to the government members opposite, you may think you're trying to get a more efficient school system, but you are ruining communities. The communities, the taxpayers who support this, don't want this. You're going to have to go back to the drawing board and think twice about what you want to achieve. I have to tell you that the community is wise to this notion that these vacant schools or these schools that will be closed will be transferred over to the Ontario Realty Corp. What's going to happen there? Are these schools going to remain within the community purview as resources to be accessible to the community? Not at all. They'll be flipped at their highest use towards development, and the community will lose that community resource forever. There are no ifs, ands or buts about it.

I am very pleased to stand in support of this. I know my caucus will be voting in favour of this. There is a message to send across to the government, and that is: Rethink your policy about school accommodation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity today to speak on this particular opposition motion, one that I'm just a little bit confused over, why they'd be putting it forward in this particular position. Certainly this government puts students first. Students are indeed number one. There is no question that with the way we have developed our funding formula and the standards we've put out, students are certainly very, very important to this government. We've developed a lot of standards.

Part of what has brought about this debate on closing of schools relates to the funding formula. I've heard some criticism today of that funding formula, and I'm going to

talk a lot about it in a few minutes, but that funding formula is such a breath of fresh air to the people of Ontario, to boards of education and certainly for the government of Ontario.

But first I'd like to speak a bit about the Toronto District School Board and some of the games they've been playing recently on school closings. They came out with the Nyberg list of schools to be closed, some 138 schools they suggested should be closed. I understood something like 100,000 students placements out there were empty, weren't being used, and something like 80 schools were already empty and being used for other purposes. I don't think the people of Ontario should have to be paying for that kind of space that's empty and not being used.

I served for two terms on the Northumberland and Newcastle Board of Education — that was the name it had back in the 1970s — and in the area that I represented we closed two schools, one on the edge of Trenton and one in Carrying Place. I can tell you that it takes a lot to stand up to the public pressures and the concerns when you close schools.

I see the Liberals and the NDP here today, and as soon as there's a bit of noise out there in the community, concern about "You might be going to close our school," they fold and they're all ready to spend the kind of money that they spent during the lost decade we went through here in Ontario. But we've had enough fearmongering from boards such as the Toronto District School Board and some of the other boards in the province. They were playing similar games. That's certainly not satisfactory either.

We've also gone through an interesting exercise about teacher employment. A year ago there was a lot of kerfuffle about all these teachers going to be laid off. As a matter of fact, Ms Nyberg said there would be some 10,000 teachers laid off across Ontario because of Bill 160. That was pretty absurd at that time, a ridiculous comment indeed. We were hearing it from other boards and from the teachers' union. We were hearing all this rhetoric.

I think a quote from the Toronto Sun is interesting:

"College chairman Donna Kennedy and college executive Margaret Wilson said the union- and school-board-driven crisis around teacher layoffs is history....

"I think...the period of teacher redundancies is largely over," Wilson said. "We have school boards phoning the college every day saying they can't find supply teachers. There is a great opportunity."

This is the kind of rhetoric we've been through with the unions. This is the kind of rhetoric we've heard from school boards. But we now know that teachers really are in great demand. There are not going to be a lot of teachers out there without work.

The students are not buying this rhetoric either. They are quite fed up with this kind of thing. Right in Cobourg, in my riding, 150 students from Cobourg East walked out in a protest last week. They are fed up with this work to rule and they want something done about it.

Just a couple of quotes from the Cobourg Star of Friday, November 20:

"'It's good, but I expected a lot more. There's no spirit left in our school,' said Michelle Flay, a student from the East...."

Another quote from another student:

"'I'm having a hard enough time staying in as it is. I've dropped out twice,' said Mitch Parkinson, an 18-year-old grade 13 student.

"'They're closing down the options us and that's not right.'"

In our board a petition has been taken up. They have some 700 students' signatures on it asking that the board and the union simply sit down and work out the agreement and get on with life, rather than work to rule.

A couple of weeks ago they had graduations in two of the high schools in my riding on a Saturday night. One in particular was rather interesting. In neither school would the teachers assist. It was purely the principals and vice-principals.

In the East Northumberland Secondary School in Brighton the parents joined in and did just an excellent job. My congratulations to the parents for picking up the slack and coming forward at a time when they were needed. I think the unions should pay attention to this. If the parents can move in and do this kind of thing to assist in the schools, there are many other things, if they're empowered, they can certainly do very well. I think the unions might be wise to pay attention to this very fact.

There's no question that our government has looked at this as a very democratic process. We've listened to stakeholders. I've mentioned here before the number of hours that we put into consultation, the number of hours and hearings, far greater than either the NDP or the Liberals when they were in government. We certainly have had a lot more consultation than the other two parties ever dreamed of having when they were in government.

Having listened — I'm side-tracking a bit — we have the flexibility. The Minister of Education announced that this funding formula, as it relates to school spaces, was extended for another year until boards get a little more organized. It looks at the 80% occupancy rather than the 100% as it originally started out.

It's obvious that the Toronto District School Board was unable to manage these kinds of savings on their own. As the minister announced, we're going to send in some assistance to identify some of the savings. It's obvious that the separate board in the same area is able to educate students a heck of a lot cheaper than the Toronto board. Similarly, if other boards are having problems, maybe we could offer to send in assistance to identify savings in those boards. What most of the boards have been doing is generously using money for administration, extra salaries, generous salaries, generous quarters for them to work out of. Our board spent something like \$4.2 million on a new headquarters. Quite generous, all in all.

Certainly it was very important to overhaul the education system. There was no question. The public has been pleading for it for over 20 years, since I was on school board in the 1970s. They've been pleading for a change in education, a different style of education, curriculum, re-

port cards that they could understand. But also, they were complaining bitterly about the property tax bill that was being laid on them. There's no question that our plans have been very thoughtfully laid out and presented. They've been very student-centred.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Like property taxation.

Mr Galt: I can tell the NDP member opposite doesn't agree with having it student-centred. It's unfortunate that they too wouldn't want to have a student-centred funding formula, because they are the ones it is all about. It isn't about salaries and staff; it's about the students who are in the system; it's about standards. I can tell you, the public has been pleading for standards in the education system for a very long time — standards in report cards, standards in the curriculum and standards about how education is funded in the province of Ontario.

1620

If we look for a few minutes at something like curriculum, as part of what we've been doing with our funding formula, we've brought out new curriculum written by teachers, for teachers, to assist teachers to educate students in our system. It has been extremely well received. I've only had one or two complaints about how it's just a little too advanced. Most of the calls I've received have been very favourable. I've had a lot of teachers tell me themselves what a good curriculum this is. We look forward to curriculum for the secondary panel as well in the not too distant future.

They appreciate the clarity it brings to what is expected of students at certain points in their education as they move through the various grades. As we have developed the curriculum, what fits in very well with it is a standardized report card, a report card designed by teachers, tested by several of the school boards and teachers prior to being implemented across the province. Parents really appreciate being able to see that their son or daughter has accomplished this level and they know where it's at. They're measuring it to a standard.

What is really unfortunate when it comes to some of these standards is we still have some boards that really resist putting out some of these marks. My board is one. They will not put out what the average was for grade 3 in a certain school. That's happening in the Toronto boards and in many other boards. It gives parents an understanding of where their school is at and what they should expect of their child in that particular school, but our board is resisting it tooth and nail and I find that very unfortunate.

The funding formula is all about putting students first. Who else should we be addressing this to other than students? It's very important that we put our students first. The funding formula is recognizing that there will be equal funding for students, no matter where they live in Ontario, and that there will be equal recognition for school boards.

It's going to limit the dollars that can be moved around in that package. They won't be able to move dollars from the classroom and move them into administration, for

salaries and for fancy offices that they have had in the past.

I don't think it should be necessary that we have to go out and hold the hands of some of these school boards to show them where there are some savings. I think back to a year ago now, when Bill 160 was a big issue. The chair of the board in my area made the statement, "If Bill 160 goes through, we won't even be allowed to buy a toothbrush." That's a quote.

It's unfortunate they make those kinds of comments because they turned around and spent \$4.2 million on their headquarters, but yet she made the statement that with Bill 160 they'd never be able to allowed to buy a toothbrush.

I've spoken out quite a bit about this new headquarters for our board, but I recognize also, yes, they did go ahead with that but they are spending the 65% on the classroom, so we're told. I believe what they're saying. I take them at their word and hope that's what we see in the audited statements down the road. I certainly commend them for taking that kind of a commitment, that they will be spending the 65% on the students and on the classroom. I've had some people phone me and obviously they're not keeping to the maximum average cap of 25 students elementary and 22 students in the secondary, but they are indicating that 65% of their budget is going to the students.

Since the Liberals brought up this particular motion, I'm sure they must have a position on education. We've been waiting for Dalton McGuinty to have a position on education. He doesn't have one on health care, and we've been waiting for one on health care as well. I thought that with this motion we would hear a very well-defined, very crisp, very clear position that Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party, has on education.

We are very committed to standards. We're committed to student progress. We're committed to the report cards. We're on record and we've come out with the commitment for the funding formula. But we understand Dalton McGuinty doesn't agree with any of these positions, any of these changes we've made. It seems that Dalton McGuinty is against higher standards in education. I guess he's against a cap to class size. It would appear that he's against report cards.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Madam Chair: It's quite in order for the member to say a lot of the things he's saying — that's politics — but I don't think it's accurate for him to start saying that the Liberal Party or the Liberal leader are against high standards. I think the member knows that. The rest I accept.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, that is not a point of order. Member for Northumberland, go ahead.

Mr Galt: I re-emphasize that the leader of the Liberal Party does not have a position on education. He does not say anything about class size, so I guess he's opposed to our cap on class sizes: 25 students for an elementary class and 22 for the secondary average, board-wide, that is. I guess he's opposed to an understandable report card. I guess he's opposed to the new funding formula that we

brought in that provides equal funding for every student in the province of Ontario. It would appear that the Leader of the Opposition is in favour of the status quo, and the people of Ontario are not satisfied with the status quo of education in this province.

It's interesting to read Christina Blizzard's column this morning, although I have to disagree with her about "Forget About That Spring Election." It could come almost any time once we get near the fourth year. I think it's interesting what she says in here about the leader of the Liberal Party. She says:

"At a recent meeting of the Ontario Hospital Association McGuinty said he would 'review' hospital closures. Well, that's a fine weasel word for a politician. Say that after he's elected, he 'reviews' all the Tory closures and decides, surprise, surprise, they were a tough thing to do, but necessary.

"This, clearly, he could have learned at the knee of his federal kissing cousin, Jean Chrétien, who won an election by saying he'd end free trade, scrap the GST and save money by killing a helicopter deal. Once in power, he decided we needed free trade, the GST — and the helicopters too.

"Much as we don't like to close hospitals, all parties know it is sound, long-range policy."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean and for St Catharines, come to order. I can't hear the member.

Mr Galt: To complete the quote: "McGuinty is basing his promises on a budget surplus. So who managed the province's economy in such a way that it created a surplus?"

I know these statements are rather disturbing to the opposition. It's unfortunate that they get so upset over some of the good things that the Tory party has been doing, but that's how government has been going over the last while.

There may or may not be a surplus when we get to the end of our term; it depends on how our tax cuts have stimulated the economy. But I'm certainly proud it's one of the accomplishments of our government — the accomplishments of our welfare reform and our restructuring of health and education in the province of Ontario.

Just a quote from songwriter Bob Dylan: "Those who are not busy being born are busy dying."

Our government has put considerable effort into reinventing the public service and it is now working very well. The opposition would prefer to see it dying instead.

In closing, I'd like to give a quote, quite simply, "People who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are busy doing it."

The people of Ontario generally support the direction of this government. I believe in the next election they want us to have and they will give us the mandate to finish the job that we have started.

1630

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): It will give me an opportunity in the few minutes that I have to emphasize the vicious manner in which the Conservative government has dropped the hatchets on eight schools in

my constituency and sentenced them to death: Lynwood Heights junior public school, Agincourt junior public school, Anson Taylor junior public school, Henry Kelsey senior public school, Dr Marion Hilliard senior public school, St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic school, Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic school and St Gabriel Lalemant Catholic school.

When they heard the news, the death sentence of killing their schools, they were in panic, they were in shock, they couldn't believe it. They gathered around and they felt that the government was putting the boots to trustees or to teachers. What they didn't realize is that a community, which is what schools are all about, would come up in arms and make a strong commitment. They will make sure that this government does not close their schools.

When they heard the news, when they heard the type of strategies that were put forward by these schools, I could hear the bugle sound of retreat. It was a sweet sound when I heard them retreating and they were shouting, "Listen, we really didn't mean it right now. We'll put \$200 million in to hold it back for one year," a reprieve, they said. They thought again that the people would be fooled by that. "If they would just give us one more year," the government was saying, "for the \$200 million, we won't close it for another year." But people knew that they were buying time because they knew that an election is coming forth, and the government blows the bugle of retreat so well.

The people are saying to me tonight — just tonight I am going to a school, St Ignatius of Loyola, and they are still adamant in telling this government to take its hands off their community, because a school is a community not only for students but for the entire community. This government comes in here to destroy a community and that will not be done. They are making sure.

I gather that some colleagues in the Conservative Party talk about the government being committed to education. Is that the way you are committed to education, when you slash over \$1 billion out of education? Is that the way you are committed to education, when you attack adult education in the manner that you've done, depriving people of their education? Is that a commitment, what you are speaking about? Is that a commitment, to drive chaos into the system and then say to yourselves: "We believe in education. Students come first?"

But people know now that this government is the type of government that is confrontational and that it has demonstrated in many ways that it has no concern for certain areas of this province. Many of the people are saying: "They're coming for you. They came for us at night and they'll come for you in the morning." They know that they will completely only be concerned about certain constituencies, and this is not so. "We want a government," the people are saying, "that is concerned about all people."

The only way I could put this well is that a grade 6 student said to me when I was visiting their school: "Why is this government closing schools? I understand, Mr Curling, that the schools are being closed because they have no money." The student said to me —

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we do not have a quorum. Can you check for a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Mr Speaker, a quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Scarborough North.

Mr Curling: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Let me again emphasize that a grade 6 student said to me, having learned that the government was devastating their education and closing their school, "All that money, Mr Curling, that is being spent in advertising and promoting Mike Harris, couldn't they use that money to save our school?"

I told the student that it depends on the priority of the government. It seems the government had no interest in education at the time, but in a profile of how they would look in using government money to promote themselves, while in the meantime closing schools. The student was extremely concerned and worried about that. This is a grade 6 student who's asking about their school being closed. The community also felt very upset at the fact that their housing market was going to go down dramatically because of the fact that they were going to dig a big hole in their community by closing their school.

This government is one that will be accountable at the time when the election comes. They continue to behave like they're the big Titanic. That glistening thing in front of them is not an iceberg; it's people who are ready for them in the next election, to make sure that this insensitive, this callous, this morbid type of attitude of this government will see the day that they will no longer be running this province and we have the more compassionate Dalton McGuinty as the Premier of this province, who will be the Premier in the near future. I urge you to call the election. Let us now go forward and have a good Liberal government in place.

Mr Pouliot: I'm delighted that some members of the government have expressed courage — I'm particularly delighted when I see in front of my very eyes the former teacher, a person who has spent more than a decade improving the education system in Ontario. I would like at some opportunity in the near future to ask that person, on a one-on-one basis, what went wrong. Why do you to this day, after three and a half years of exposure in this House, believe everything the Premier's office tells you? You're a teacher, you've been there, you've heard your leader and successive ministers of education declaring war on teachers, declaring war on education ever since you took office on June 8, 1995.

1640

I say to my distinguished colleague and former teacher opposite, you could have said, "No, I will not adhere to this policy." In lieu, you choose to be what you refer to as a team player — well, as a bit of a doormat, with respect. In the context of education, you did not stand up for the people you represent, for the people who are footing the

bill, for the people paying your wages and your parliamentary assistant's stipend. You didn't give them a hand; you gave them the back of your hand. One more time, you cannot improve the education system by putting teachers last. It doesn't work this way.

Now, on the eve of an election — this is incompetence at its worst — we've had the property taxation exercise not five, not six, but seven times. The time of this House, of the members, has been occupied and they have been preoccupied with fixing the mistakes before. They simply cannot get it right. But the revolution goes on.

First they take \$1 billion out of education. That's \$1 billion that the Progressive Conservatives, the government of the day, took out of education, depriving people of an essential service. Then they create confusion. For the first time in the history of Ontario — and the Minister of Education is right here. I'm happy that he is here paying us the compliment of his visit. He is the architect. Come here. Be on camera with me.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): If you could only get it right, I'd be happy to listen to you.

Mr Pouliot: This is the person. We are on opposite sides. I am with you. Mr Johnson has chosen a different course. One billion dollars taken out of the system, taken out from books, from classrooms, from school boards to give a chance for people to integrate, to participate fully in the future of the province and the country.

We will be supporting the Liberals' motion because, simply put, it's opposition day and we share the same disdain for the government, except that as we seek the same destination, at this fork we take on different routes. We say, as New Democrats, that if you make the commendable salary per annum, the yearly salary, of \$80,000 — still a lot of money nowadays — what we will do is take the money, the Tory tax cut, and put it back into education and health.

Beware, Speaker. If anyone else tells you that they will improve education with more funding, simply ask them, "Where will the money come from?" Our friends — not our friends opposite; our friends beside us, the Liberals — ask for nothing. They don't have a formula. They don't have a program. They receive nothing. When I look at the Conservatives and the Liberals, it's the perfect marriage indeed.

One billion dollars taken out. But you see, what this government does perhaps better than anyone else is blame, blame, blame. Economically, if we have a recovery, if people benefit, they take the credit. If we have a recession, a slowdown, they blame Asia, they blame the opposition. You see, when you take the credit for good times, you must also take the credit for bad times. One would expect a lot more from this government.

People will attest — and I'm talking about not politicians but parliamentarians, political pundits who study these things, who study politics. They will tell you that since Confederation in the annals of the province of Ontario they have never seen such incompetence. One

would expect better from the Progressive Conservative Party.

There's an assumption out there that they can manage the books. Let me convey to them that it takes an awful lot more than a pinstriped suit, a silk tie and a club membership card in your pocket and the exclusivity of the country club to manage an economy like Ontario's. After three and a half years, they still spend tens of thousands of dollars more each and every hour of the day than they take in. Is this competence? Go to the top of the CN Tower on a clear day and you will see 40% of the gross domestic product in front of your very eyes, yet we in Ontario, rich Ontario, the breadbasket of the country, will be the last jurisdiction to balance the books. If this is not incompetence — they had some choices. They've cut taxes mostly for the wealthy. For people who make astronomical salaries, for the well-to-do, they've cut taxes by \$5 billion.

The school of thought to which I adhere, my philosophy when it comes to debit and credit is a simple one: One has to live within one's means. While other people go on a cruise, I go for a walk. If I cannot afford it, I have a mindset that I might not want it, it is not beneficial, and you look long term. Why doesn't this government conduct their affairs the way I conduct my humble affairs? Alas, it's more complex. C'est plus compliqué. Ce n'est jamais si facile. But these people will have the province in the poorhouse if they continue their ill-fated attitude towards economics. They had the opportunity.

Pay your debt first, I say to the Minister of Education. That's good economics. Once you're debt-free, then you can throw a party. That gives you more latitude. You don't have to pay those divvies, those coupons. This is an obligation.

At present this government — and I want the hard-working people in Ontario to be aware of it — each and every year is paying upwards of \$9.5 billion just to pay the interest on the debt. This is more than what is being spent on primary and secondary education. Isn't this awkward? Yet they would have us believe that if they're given another chance — two weeks ago they were to close community schools in each special part of Ontario: the north; the southeast; the southwest; central Ontario; Metropolitan Toronto, 138 schools. Then literally all hell broke loose. What you have is une situation extraordinaire. It's taken on extraordinary proportions.

The soul of the community has been taken away. A school is more than a school; it's the vibrancy. It's almost the air that you breathe. It defines your community. It's not a factory; it has a human dimension. It deals with the future, our future. They, for the mere sake of a buck, of a tax cut, have to find the money someplace. So what they do is take the school and tear the heart out. They take the school out of the community and then they turn around and pay it up in a tax break for mainly the most fortunate.

All hell breaks loose. So now they're telling you on the eve of the election, six months, four months before: "We've made another mistake, so give us your trust. We've declared war on education, on teachers, people have been decimated, hope has been taken away, but don't

leave us now. We've beaten you up for three and a half years, but you either had it coming, you deserved it or it was for your own good."

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Now they want to make peace. They say: "Electorate, please do not leave me. I didn't mean to. I will love you, and I will put the money back, because I want to win the next election."

Two or three months after the next election, say it won't happen but should they be re-elected, they will whack you good. These people will knock you good. You see, they're just buying a little time. That's all they're doing, no more, no less; a policy of appeasement so that we might forget. They give you a few dollars more. They love you. They numb your feelings. Hopefully you will forget.

The people will not forget this government's policies on education. They have a record which is unmatched, a punitive record, not encouragement but deterrence. This is what the government has said.

We have dozens of people in the gallery this evening and they're here believing that the system will get better. They're here to see, as a last resort, if some of the government members will have the backbone — maybe Mr Ford will have the fortitude — to come forward and say that what is being proposed today, although it's being proposed by the Liberals, I must say, is not all bad. At least it voices opposition. There is no alternative, but they can start working on some alternatives. We will join with our friends from the official opposition in telling the government that there is a better way, there are better alternatives. What you've done is wrong. It could have been avoided. With goodwill, things will only get better in the future.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): It's a pleasure to join my colleagues today from Northumberland and Simcoe Centre in presenting some comments in opposition to the motion that's before us in the House today, and to share the government's perspective with respect to the issues at hand and certainly the education reforms the Minister of Education and Training in our government has pursued to date.

My colleague the member for Lake Nipigon made reference to extraordinary circumstances. What's truly extraordinary about the circumstances today, as we reflect upon where we've been over the past three years and where we need to go into the future, is that really no substantive changes were considered with respect to education reforms in this province for the past 10 years. That's significant in the context of the very important reforms this government has pursued on behalf of the students and teachers of this province to ensure that there's a redirection and refocusing on the very important things that are important to them as individuals, not only to succeed in their academic careers but as well to ensure that we're pursuing all measures possible to provide the necessary tools for the talented teachers in this province to excel at their craft. What is extraordinary is that there has been foot-dragging, a lack of desire and willingness in previous

governments to take the next important step in terms of reforming the education system, not only for today but into the future.

It's in that context that the government has presented a long-term vision, another term that my colleague beside me referred to. The reforms this government has placed and pursued over the course of the past three years not only address the circumstances of today, in terms of the transitional issues that school boards and others realize is part of the reform process, but also provide a foundation or an opportunity for us to continue to build on student achievement and the achievement of others within the education community well into the future.

By doing that, we've heard a lot about the amount that's spent on education in this province. As my colleague the member for Simcoe Centre indicated, clearly we'll be spending in excess of \$15 billion. As I have the opportunity to travel around and meet with students, parents and others who have interests in education in this province on behalf of the minister in various locations in this province, clearly there is a desire and a recognition that change has to occur. Clearly people want to see where monies are being spent within the education system in this province.

I thought just for a brief moment, because I know the minister wishes to speak today as well, I would give those here an idea of the commitments this government has made, where the monies are being directed in the context of that \$15 billion. As I said previously, as part of recognizing the change process we're going through, the government has allocated some \$306 million to assist school boards in terms of their restructuring and transition processes. We've allocated an additional \$50 million to assist in covering debentures outstanding held in the name of school boards in this province, in an effort to provide the fair and equitable basis that we want to achieve with respect to our school board system. We've covered some \$46 million in teacher retirement gratuities.

With respect to the classroom, we've seen an investment of some \$20 million in Internet for the classrooms, a tool no matter what grade or class you're in, in any school in this province. The very obvious observation that can be recognized through that process is the significant role that the Internet is playing and the interchange it's allowing for students in their classrooms across this province.

We've seen an additional \$11 million for science and technology and the opportunity for school boards to pursue tutors in the classroom. We've seen an additional \$40 million for special education for students in high-risk positions who need extra attention to ensure that their special needs are being met and their education opportunities are being maximized. We've seen \$30 million spent in addressing the seven-and-a-half credit weighting to ensure that we are meeting our average class-size expectation.

Significant allocations of money have been made, both for ensuring the change process works and as well for providing the foundation of tools that students and teachers will need into the future. While that is occurring we

see as well, notwithstanding the issue of school closure and the position I find and certainly disagree with that the opposition has taken, examples of new schools opening in various communities across this province, 25 opening between now and the end of this year and over the course of the next three years an additional 200 schools. Very clearly, the Minister of Education and Training is recognizing the need to rejuvenate, renew and in some cases rebuild the facilities that house our students to ensure they have appropriate learning environments so they can excel.

A lot has been said about rural schools, but I want to make it very clear today that in designing the pupil accommodation grant, the ministry understood, as did the minister, the importance of recognizing the circumstances that exist with respect to small schools in this province. In fact, we've seen a doubling of the amount of money allocated for small schools, from nearly \$27 million to nearly \$56 million, an increase of \$29 million. For those areas of Ontario that are classified as rural and remote, we've attempted through the formula to recognize those geographic factors that are significant and relevant to those communities in terms of location and the distances between schools in our province in remote areas. We have seen there recognition and a doubling of funds to ensure that those specific characteristics and needs are being addressed. We've seen, through the allocation, an addition of some \$49 million to address the remote and rural school scenario as well as the small school issue in this province.

There has been significant consideration given. The decision the minister made, as well as the Premier, with respect to capacity is again an example of how this government is prepared to respond in a positive way to specific issues, issues of flexibility, to ensure that the funding formula that has been proposed and implemented effectively in September of this year is meeting the needs of our communities across this province.

The objective of that formula is not to see any school closures in this province. Notwithstanding the formula, there will be local decisions that have to be made in recognition of demographic and population shifts that occur within our various communities across the province. That is why historically we have seen, as has been indicated here previously, the closure of some 136 schools under the Liberal regime and some 105 schools under the New Democratic Party's government administration. It's in that context that there is some historical relevance to school closures. Typically, and as they will be in the future, those decisions have been locally based, in response to the demands and circumstances of that individual school board.

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The reality is, though, that there will always be educational partners or partners in the system that don't at this point in time share the government's agenda for quality in education. I understand that and respect the position. I obviously don't agree with it, but very clearly it's real. More noticeably, though, I think more and more, those people who are involved in education, those either in the direct delivery of education or in the administration of

it, understand that the quality element is important and continue to work with our government in terms of ensuring that those issues are being addressed in a timely and appropriate way. That's why we have listened in the context of the issues they've asked for with respect to providing flexibility, with respect to recognizing the differences in capacities that exist within our school system and providing the appropriate policy response.

I would say simply, in conclusion, for those in opposition who suggest that when we don't act we're not listening, very clearly the decision of the Premier and the Minister of Education in this regard is not partisan, as has been suggested, but an indication of our willingness to respond to the requests of those who were dramatically affected by those decisions.

I can only say from my own perspective with respect to my local school board that although there was an initial knee-jerk reaction to this issue, the members of the board of the Thames Valley District School Board have taken a more progressive role in terms of their understanding of where we need to go with respect to school facilities in the future and have embarked upon what I think is the logical process that the ministry, the minister and myself anticipated would be pursued in good faith. It's in that context that I see in my own community the desire on the part of those individuals involved in school administration to seek a more progressive approach, one that's meaningful not only to them as administrators but also meaningful to parents and students in their communities, to ensure that their issues of concern, their hopes for tomorrow, are being addressed.

In conclusion, I want to congratulate my local board officials. I know it has been difficult, but I wish to recognize that they do realize there is an agenda here for a longer-term vision, one that will contribute to the betterment of education for all students in this province.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I am pleased to join in the debate this afternoon on the motion standing in the name of my colleague Mrs McLeod, the member for Fort William. I want to address my remarks to two or three aspects of this educational debate that have arisen on previous occasions and are of particular concern to my constituents in rural, small-town eastern Ontario.

Let me say at the outset that I think there is a broad base of consensus in this Legislature and in this community called Ontario that certain changes in education are timely and ought to be supported. I have said before and I repeat now that in my estimation there is a consensus that a number of the initiatives in terms of reform of the curriculum, increased accountability, more involvement for parents, to name but three areas, are areas where the three major parties in this Legislature and in the province are increasingly at one. This current government, it seems to me, on substantive policy matters is moving forward with a number of the initiatives that were developed by the royal commission on education launched by the previous government, and I'm bold enough to say that some of the initiatives I saw in the Bégin-Caplan report of two or three

years ago builds on a number of the programs that were launched in the 1980s.

The concern I have, quite frankly, is that we have had in recent times a major change in the way in which educational policy is organized and delivered in this province, and that takes us back to the famous Bill 160. My fundamental objection to the legislation was the massive centralization it brought about. Even if one wanted that kind of power at the centre, I would argue, as someone who was once Minister of Education in the province, that it is not reasonable to expect that any one official or any one group of officials at the department of education in downtown Toronto, or quite frankly in downtown Quebec City or in downtown Winnipeg, is going to be able to direct that kind of detailed program administration across the province.

In Ontario we have some 5,000 schools to which two million students go on a daily basis. Bill 160, in my view, is seriously flawed because it is such a massive centralization of power to the centre. The irony and the paradox is that Mike Harris said, "Elect me and I will give power to the people." Well, in educational reform what he has done with his legislation, Bill 160, is in fact taken power from the people, from communities, from neighbourhoods, whether they be in rural Renfrew or in downtown Ottawa or in downtown Toronto, and given that power increasingly to the education minister and the education bureaucrats in the department here at the corner of Bay and Wellesley in the heart of this provincial capital.

You heard earlier today my colleague the finance critic for the Liberal Party, Mr Phillips, say that under Bill 160 the Minister of Education now sets on his own, privately, \$5.5 billion worth of education tax policy that has an enormous impact on the people and the businesses of Ontario. That's done by regulation by the minister and by his officials, a dramatic change from the way in which we had developed those programs in the past.

The other concern I have is the rigidity of the various formulae that have been developed by Messrs Johnson and Harris under Bill 160. We are here today to discuss a couple of specific examples. Those of us who've been around the education debate wondered how long it would be before the gunpowder detonated and blew the poor minister into a very unhappy situation with respect to the school closure and the school space policy that was also part of the famous Bill 160.

It didn't take very long, and I'm sure my friend from Mississauga South was quietly advising her colleagues at council that this was bound to happen. Because again we had a group of political operatives determined to centralize all of the real authority in the hands of the minister, in the hands of the cabinet here in Toronto, and they developed formulae that were extremely rigid and, for many purposes, altogether impractical.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Speak up, Sean.

Mr Conway: Well, I say again, I was making these comments four or five weeks ago and I was stunned to find out that the capitulation occurred as quickly as it did. I

was driving to a football game a couple of weeks ago and I heard the bugles of retreat. Mr Johnson did what he had to do. No one, not even someone as doughty and as resilient as our friend from Leaside, could take the kind of punishment and pain that that rigid formula was going to cause for him, and it is not over yet.

I want to turn now to a specific matter, and I'm delighted to see Mr Johnson, the Minister of Education, in the House this afternoon, because if there ever was a perfectly good example of how outrageously rigid and impractical is this current formula of educational finance in Ontario today, it is the following. We have a new formula, thanks to Mr Johnson and his friend Mr Harris, and one of the factors in the educational funding formula is a factor for rural and remote school boards. It has been recalibrated, changed from an earlier edition.

Now, it will come as a very real surprise, I say to my friends in the House — and I see I'm now joined by my colleague and neighbour Mr Jordan, the member for Lanark-Renfrew, because Renfrew county is the largest county in the province of Ontario. It is 3,000 square miles. It runs almost 200 kilometres northward from the town of Arnprior to the Nipissing line just southeast of Mattawa. It runs over 140 kilometres from the hamlet of La Passe on the Ottawa River, within sight of the church at Fort-Coulonge, Quebec, out to west of Combermere. It contains large communities like Pembroke, small farm villages like Cobden and Beachburg and a lot of rural townships like Griffith and Matawatchan, Westmeath and many others. A more rural Ontario or Canadian community you could not find.

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You can imagine then how stunned and how upset people in my county are, particularly if they're public school ratepayers, to find out that under the new Mike Harris-Dave Johnson formula for educational funding, the public school board in Renfrew county, the largest rural county in the province, gets nothing — not a cent — on the rural and remote grant factor. Not only does the Renfrew county public school board get not a cent under that rural and remote factor, but that indignity is exacerbated by the fact that public school boards in Kingston, Lindsay, Belleville, to name three, get monies.

In the case of the Kingston public school board, they get \$1.35 million on the rural and remote granting factor. The Lindsay-Victoria public school board, according to the ministry data, gets \$2.1 million on the rural and remote factor. The Hastings-Prince Edward public school board gets \$1.9 million. Our neighbours to the near north in Parry Sound and North Bay get over \$2 million, as I recall.

We don't begrudge them that. But you can imagine being a farmer in Admaston township or a small business person in Petawawa or Killaloe or Barry's Bay and saying, "How is it possible that we've got bright men and women in the government of Ontario who've developed in the interests of fairness and equity a new funding formula that has as one of its ingredients a rural and remote factor that gives to the Kingston public school board

approximately \$1.4 million, gives to the Hastings-Belleville-Prince Edward public school board \$1.9 million of rural and remote money and gives to Renfrew county public school board not a cent?" Not a cent. It's just incredible and it is indefensible.

I'm pleased my friend Mr Jordan is here. To his credit, he, like myself, has fought the battle, and we continue to fight on behalf of the public school ratepayers in our county because fairness and equity clearly dictate that the people of Renfrew county should, under the rural and remote grant factor, get at least as much as people living in Kingston and Belleville and North Bay and Lindsay, all of whose public school boards get between \$1 million and \$2.5 million.

It's just an example — one very specific, one very real and one very current example — of the problem that we've got as a result, however well intended the policy was, of a new education funding formula that is evidently too rigid, too inflexible because quite frankly it is too centralized.

I say, before I take my seat, on behalf of the thousands of students who are educated, and educated well, on a daily basis by the public school board in Renfrew county, please, Minister, listen to the common sense of a compelling argument. Change this formula and give the Renfrew county public school board what it deserves, which is surely at least as much money under the rural and remote granting factor as you are now giving to the public school boards in the very rural communities of Kingston, Belleville and Lindsay, which are doing quite well under your new formula. We expect equal treatment, equal justice, and the time for a change to make this possible is now.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I'm pleased to speak to this motion today. First of all, I would say to the member for Northumberland, you guys are the government. It's up to you to govern. Though you may not recognize it, there's no campaign yet. When the election is called, you can count on it that you'll see our policies very clearly.

I believe Essex-Kent has the only school in Ontario that has already been closed because of the disastrous Mike Harris funding formula. In fact, parents from Romney Central School staged a dramatic protest on the lawn of the Legislature in July to tell Mike Harris that he is creating chaos for children in rural Ontario. They even held a funeral for rural schools. They were joined by two representatives from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and parents from H.A. Tanser, Orford public and many Toronto parent councils.

I also held a meeting in St Thomas in October to protest rural and community school closures. We heard from 15 different parent groups from across southwestern Ontario and even a few from Toronto. After the meeting, the London Free Press carried a front-page story with colour photos. The Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail and Maclean's, the national magazine, carried stories about parents who are uniting to fight back. This issue has caught fire and Mike Harris needs to put the fire out before the next election.

Those parents can be proud, and I am proud of them, that they helped force this dramatic about-face by the government. Mike Harris and the Tory backbenchers have consistently blamed school boards, even, incredibly, frugal boards like Lambton-Kent, for the closures. But parent outrage has finally made Mike Harris admit that the flaws are in his funding formula.

The battle is not over. The government's one-size-fits-all Band-Aid is no better than the once-size-fits-all funding formula. It misses the hurt in rural Ontario and achieves very little for rural schools. In Lambton-Kent, only 26 of 63 schools are operating at 80% capacity or better. Ten schools in my community are still on the chopping block in the current review. The unique needs of rural communities are not recognized by this Band-Aid solution.

Increased time on buses is still a threat for thousands of rural students. In my community of Merlin, parents are already up in arms about the length of time students must wait to get on buses in the evening. They are being monitored by their parents. This is not a reasonable solution. I've written to the minister about this issue. What will happen when even more students are forced on to more buses for longer rides?

Premier, your Band-Aid solution doesn't work, least of all in rural Ontario. Romney is the litmus test. Romney has become a symbol for all Ontario. Will Romney public school be reopened and returned to the parents and students of that community?

Mike Harris is making a blatant political attempt at damage control. Now Tory backbenchers are saying that school boards need more flexibility. What hypocrisy. What a flip-flop. After blaming boards for the past six months, make no mistake, the agenda of Mike Harris includes abolishing school boards and introducing charter and voucher schools. Supporters of publicly funded education must beware. Mike Harris once said, "I shudder to think what would happen to public education if control falls into the hands of government." We all know what happens. Let us all beware.

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Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): What I think we're seeing today and what we've seen over the course of the last several months is that this government has completed its plan for crises in education. This is the final straw. But this is going to be the straw that will break the camel's back because the people of Ontario, the people in the small communities, will not allow their schools to be broken by the Harris government.

I only have to go as far as Sudbury, Ontario, and talk about the French schools that are on the chopping block with regard to the French Catholic separate school board: Saint-Pierre, Léon XIII and Saint-Mathieu. They're not going to go down without a fight and they are going to be requesting from this government that it indeed be held accountable, that the monies that are owed to these school boards are given to these school boards so that these schools can stay open. Let it be clearly understood that we as politicians will rally behind those people to ensure that

their schools are protected, that their communities continue to be viable educational components.

Hon David Johnson: In my three minutes and 21 seconds remaining, I just wish to remind all the members of the House of the objectives of the funding formula, the new way of assisting school boards across the province.

Number one, it's to improve the quality of education.

Number two, it's to ensure a fairness and an equity in terms of each and every child, to treat each and every child across Ontario equally and fairly. We know that over the course of the last any number of years children have not had the benefit of the same resources across the province. A child living in rural Ontario in a poor district would not have the same access to resources as a child living in a wealthy area in a large urban centre, and yet we tolerated this, governments tolerated that, tolerated the lack of opportunities for our youngsters in various parts of particularly rural Ontario. This government has said we can no longer tolerate that. A child is a child is a child across the province of Ontario, and they all should be treated equally.

Finally, accountability is important in our system, and that's why we wish to get the parents involved.

The Liberal Party, I must say, unfortunately repeats the same incorrect facts over and over again, thinking you can fool all the people all the time: cuts in education. Well, if you don't believe me, and I understand the Liberal Party will never believe me, how about the Windsor Star? The Windsor Star of Saturday, November 14, says that in education "Total spending is up." It says that "the bottom line shows that this year \$15 billion will be spent on elementary and secondary education. Last year, total spending was \$14.4 billion." That is \$600 million more spent on education. It goes on to say that in 1994-95, there was \$14 billion. So we are dedicating more monies to our children, to our classes, to textbooks, to pay for teachers, to the important things in the classroom.

Nevertheless, the funding formula, as with any funding formula, isn't perfect and wasn't perfect. After listening to the people — listening to the people of rural Ontario, listening to the people of urban Ontario — it became clear that they were under the threat of some school boards, and I won't say all school boards but just certain school boards in certain areas, closing community schools. We could not tolerate this; the Premier could not tolerate this. So we made adjustments. Recognizing that some community schools will not have a full enrolment, recognizing that some schools have special features, we added over \$200 million to the budget to ensure that our community schools, which are so important to parents and to students, will remain open.

That's what we've done and I'm very confident that with that investment, those community schools will remain open in the future.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Let me just say to the Minister of Education that that's just a load of garbage. The fact of the matter is that you moved off the dime because public opinion was turning against you in such numbers, at a time when you're ramping up to

the next election, that you couldn't withstand the political storm. That's the reality. You've done nothing as a government to show that you've ever listened to anyone on a whole host of issues, and I've listed them in virtually every speech I've ever made about what you've done to labour legislation and the lack of democracy.

This government has been run through with anti-democratic procedures that ram through legislation without listening to anyone. You're just kidding yourselves or feeding fish to the backbenchers when you think that anybody believes for a minute that you moved for any other reason than the real politics of what happened when you declared that you were going to stick to your absolutely unfair, unreasonable funding formula that was causing closures all across the province. In fact that fight, that backlash, had already started in rural communities, certainly it had happened in Hamilton-Wentworth and it had happened in a number of other communities, but it was the critical mass of the provincial media centred here in Toronto reacting to the Toronto numbers that caused you folks to reel and say, "We've got to do something here." That's why you moved.

Please don't insult the public of Ontario by suggesting it had anything to do with listening. You've never listened to anyone except yourselves and your close corporate buddies. That's it. No one else matters in Mike Harris's Ontario and in Dave Johnson's education system. Oh, but it's your system, isn't it? Isn't it ironic that the party that talked — even today we heard the citizenship minister saying that local decisions are best, yet when it came to education, you pulled everything away from the local community and vested all the power in yourselves. You know what would have happened if we had done that? You would have been screaming, "Stalinists, central planning," all the red-baiting that one could possibly imagine. Every one of your government members would have been flying that message.

The reality is that you're the ones who centralized it. Why did that happen? It's important that we take the context of all this. It happened in part because local school boards like mine in Hamilton said to you, when you first started making the cuts, and you eliminated the fact that junior kindergarten was mandatory — you removed that. You went back to your choice thing, "They have the choice to keep it or not," after you'd cut funding and you had every hope that they would eliminate it because you never did support it.

I remember standing in my place in this Legislature in the current political environment of "God forbid that anyone should raise taxes or defend the fact that public money needs to be spent on the public good"; I remember standing in my place supporting the school board for a very modest increase in the school tax portion of the property tax bill so that we could keep junior kindergarten in Hamilton. I still maintain that our school board, to their credit, made the right decision for the children of our community: They kept JK.

There were enough boards like mine in Hamilton that had the courage to stand up to you and say, "We're going

to keep in place what's right for our kids no matter what the political cost." That was the position they took. There were enough doing it that you got so upset that anyone would dare defy the great Mike Harris government when they had sent down their edict from on high. What did you do with the result? You took all the power that used to be down in the local communities and you said: "We're taking all this away. No more power to you people since you won't follow what the great god Mike Harris has said. We're going to take away all that power and we're going to bring it back here into the secrecy of the cabinet room." That's what Bill 160 is all about and that's why we're in this mess.

Let's not forget, Minister, that it was your colleague who sits only a couple of seats over from you who said that he had to create the phony crisis — my words; I'm paraphrasing — in order to justify the actions you were going to take. In that, you've been singularly successful, because there is crisis. In this situation, where you've now started to exercise the powers you've given yourself, I say to the education czar, and you've created a funding formula that was going to force over 40 school closures in our region, what did our new board, the Hamilton-Wentworth public school board, do? They told you to shove it. They said: "We're not going to do this. We're not going to arbitrarily, unilaterally, without public consultation close all those schools in our community. We're not going to do it." I was at that meeting and I can remember standing and giving them a standing ovation and applauding them with all my heart and soul, and so did every other parent and teacher and child in that room. And you know what? It was a unanimous decision. There were people who are, if not members, certainly followers and supporters of your government who stood on that motion to make sure that it was unanimous.

1730

What the government was asking as a result of the rules they were laying down and their changed funding formula was that we would have gone from an 18-month consultation, an 18-month public process whenever there was a need to consider whether or not a school would remain open or closed based on, by the way, student enrolment and not funding. The government likes to stand up and say: "This has happened before. X number of schools closed under this government and X number under that government." The reality is, there's never been a school closure in Ontario, before you and your government, that was based on dollars or lack thereof; it was based on student enrolment, and in those cases in our community the policy is they would take 18 months.

Given the fact that our board officials did not get the final details of your funding formula until close to the end of September of this year, by the time that information was assimilated and analyzed and the options drawn up, that would have meant two weeks of public input in the city of Hamilton, in the Hamilton-Wentworth public school board. Shameful.

The Hamilton Spectator, by and large editorially big-time supporters of this government, had an incredibly

cutting editorial saying that you were wrong, that you had to pull back, and in fact congratulating our local school board, like I am today, for standing up to your undemocratic, unfair changes.

In those two weeks our board was expected to make decisions on closing anywhere between 20 and 45 schools, depending on what numbers you want to use. That is the range of schools that would have had to close, and even then we wouldn't have met all the formula. It's absolutely disgraceful that you would put forward a policy and changes and try to ram that down the throats of local school boards.

Our board, as I have said, unanimously stood up and said, "No way." That was a risky move. There were financial penalties to our local school board to the tune of multi-millions of dollars, which we need just as much as any other board in the province. But our board, under the leadership of Chair Ray Mulholland, believed that this was so important and so crucial to the provision of the kind of education system our kids deserve that they said no. They were going to take the time necessary to make sure there was democratic input, regardless of what you did or didn't do. I cannot ever say enough about the courage and vision and commitment of our school board trustees in Hamilton-Wentworth when it comes to the needs of our kids and putting them first. We're very fortunate in our community to have trustees of the calibre and integrity that we do.

It wasn't just them. You will recall that I brought to your attention in the House the fact that the beekeepers were immediately mounting a public campaign to save Allenby school. I think this would have been the fourth go-round where the parents in that community around Locke Street were prepared to fight to save their school. Mike Johnson, who's the chair of the Allenby school parent council, led that charge. You know what? Ray Mulholland was there. I give him so much credit. Before the board had decided where they were going to go, he was there supporting that school, supporting the parents, saying it's unfair, and recognizing the unfairness of what you were trying to ram down the throat of our community.

What else did Bill 160 do? First of all, you killed every collective agreement that teachers had in Ontario effective the day before most children were to go back to school. You wanted that confrontation. You wanted the problems that resulted, and we're still seeing them with rotating strikes and other kinds of problems all across Ontario. You caused that. You wanted it. You want that pitched "us and them" polarization in Ontario when it comes to teachers.

What else have we got now? We've got teachers who don't have adequate prep time. You ran ads then, as you are doing now, saying: "This is about 25 minutes of school. That's all this is. Shouldn't teachers give 25 minutes of extra work like everybody else has had to give a little?" That was the premise you were putting forward in those ads. The reality is, it wasn't about working 25 more minutes. The teachers offered you that. You didn't want that. What you wanted was for them to take on 25 more

students because you had to cover off the \$1 billion that you'd cut from the education system. That's what that was all about. And now they don't have adequate time.

We know what's going to happen now. As time unfolds, you're going to say, "Look at how much the numbers are up in terms of the ratio of teacher-student time." You're going to say: "See how good we've done? There's more teacher time. Just look at the stats." But the reality is, it's more students; it's not more instruction. I have a six-year-old daughter who is in the school system and I'm sure there are other members here who have children or grandchildren in the system. There's not more time for them; there's more of them with fewer teachers. That's what's happened under Bill 160.

Then, of course, we know that there's your little shell game in terms of classroom spending. Anybody who is watching this, please pay particular attention. Every time the Minister of Education or the Premier talks about increased spending, they always say "increased classroom spending." They have to say those words. Why? Because they redefined what is spending in the classroom. As long as they can increase funding to those few items, they can make that declaration. They can stand up and say that and technically it's true.

What they don't tell you by virtue of standing on those words and that technicality is that the schools are a lot dirtier because cleaning doesn't come under classroom spending. Heating and lighting don't come under classroom spending. Maintenance on the computers is not classroom spending. That's why they use that terminology. They say, "We've increased classroom spending." The fact of the matter is that overall spending per pupil is lower, which is what really matters when we take into account the increase in enrolment. Per pupil spending is lower. That's what matters.

I think the teachers make an excellent point when they say that the teachers' work environment is our children's learning environment. I think that is so crucial to all of this debate about school closures, the future of education and how much money is being spent in the system. That's why I don't believe, as much as you would like, that people should separate the teachers' working conditions from the overall impact of what's happening in our schools.

After everything you've done to teachers, everything you've said about them, the insults you've hurled at them and the insults to their professionalism, you still stand up and say, "I think it's shameful that they're not doing all the extracurricular activities they were doing before," never mentioning the fact that that's not part of their contract. They don't have to be coaches on those football teams. They don't have to be out there with the debating societies. They don't have to be there with the computer clubs and the chess clubs and the art clubs and all the other things that make up a wholesome, fully rounded school experience. None of those things are in their contract. They do them because they see it as part of their professional commitment to our kids.

1740

After what you've done to them in Bill 160, you still have the audacity to stand up in your place in the Legislature and condemn them because they are prepared to go through these hoops of fire and offer up themselves as your sacrificial lambs to make the system work. Wouldn't you just love that: that everybody goes the extra mile, eliminates their whole personal life, forgets everything you've done to them to make the system work so that you don't have a political problem? Because you do have a huge political problem with this.

Yes, a little bit of the pressure is off because you've put it off for a year, but people aren't conned. When I'm walking through my community, I talk to parents. They know that this thing has only been delayed, and if there aren't fundamental changes to the funding formula, we're still going to have the same number of schools closing. They're just not going to close as quickly, but close they will nonetheless unless there's a change. Obviously that change is only going to happen during the election. That's why you're trying to create as much peace as you can. I come back to my opening remark that it's got nothing to do with your listening. You don't listen to anyone.

My colleagues earlier talked about, where is the money going to come from? It's interesting to look at the political dynamic that's created right now that you find yourselves in. You're in desperate need. You've lowballed a lot of your financial projections to ensure that you can have this surprise, good-news announcement in the new year, just prior to the election, that you've either got a balanced budget, or what you'd really like is a surplus so you can announce new spending and tell everybody in the province that everything is fine, that you're on top of it. That's what you would like to do. That's why you're lowballing a lot of these projections.

What's interesting about the political juxtaposition that's created is that by providing your surplus you give the Liberals, the official opposition, the one thing they need desperately, which is to explain where they're going to get the money to honour the commitments they're making in terms of health care and education in particular. There you are, stuck with this problem of wanting to have a surplus for your own nefarious purposes, probably a tax cut, which is the last bloody thing that people in this province need as we see our health system and our education system dissolving around us. By solving your problem, you help solve the Liberal problem, so you've got a bigger problem.

At the end of the day, the only difference between you and the Liberals is that you say you like what you're doing and are going to continue to do it; the Liberals say they don't like it and they're going to continue what you're doing. That's the defence; that's what's going on here. There's no difference between the two of them, absolutely none.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. I knew that whatever minor supportive applause was coming from

over here, because they like the attack part, was going to disappear when I started to talk about the open nerve in terms of the funding of all this. That's what it is. It's an open nerve for them. In my opinion there are an awful lot of them who wish they had gone down the road we're going down that said that we will identify —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor — thank you.

Mr Christopherson: There are an awful lot of them who in their heart of hearts wished they had taken a position that said, "We will show some integrity here," because by opposing the 30% tax cut that's only benefited the very wealthy in this province to any degree — I'm already knocking on doors in my new riding and I can't find anyone who says, "Oh yeah, my life is better because of the tax cut." They're not there in my riding but, boy, they've got a lot to say about the health care system that you're demolishing in Hamilton and the education system that you're damaging in Hamilton.

The opposition Liberals wish they had shown the same kind of integrity and said, "You know, if we're going to oppose that tax cut, then we'd better at some point say that we're going to reverse some part of it." That's what we in the New Democratic Party have done. We have said that if you have a single taxable income of over \$80,000, then you're in the top 6% of the population who got 25% of the \$5 billion to \$6 billion of that tax cut. You can afford to go back to the 1995 taxation level. You've done very well by Mike Harris, thank you very much. You can afford to go back to 1995. That will generate over \$1.5 billion of real money that we can put into our hospital system and we can put into our education system and we can rehire nurses and we can funnel money into the emergency wards and we can make sure that schools stay open in Ontario rather than closing to meet your deficit cutting.

They wish they had done that. I know it. I don't expect them to admit it, but I know there some of them must be saying, "We should have done something like that because we really are vulnerable, although we talk a different story than the Tories." Just like going from Mulroney with Kim Campbell in there, which was really just a ruse, but just like going from Mulroney to Chrétien changed nothing in terms of national policy, going from Mike Harris to the Liberals is going to mean exactly the same thing: no change.

It all stays the same, because when it comes to the tough decision about saying, "Where's the money going to come from?" it's only the New Democrats that are prepared to say, "Here's where \$1.5 billion are going to come from." That's where we're going to get it and we're going to put it back into education and back into health care, and we will improve things, unlike the Liberals, who will just wring their hands and say, "Oh, we wish we could, we wish we could, but we're going to have to stay with the Mike Harris system," and that would be the reality.

I want to remind people, it's going to be a fascinating election. There are a number of possible outcomes. When

we look at the last two provincial elections and compare the poll numbers that people like to talk to about where we are now, it suggests that things may not end up the way that some folks in this House might think they would. When we look at the by-election, where my colleague right here beside me wasn't even supposed to be here, Blain Morin is here because when we went out with our message, people supported our message of investing in health care and investing in education. They rejected the Liberals, they rejected the Tories, and that's what's going to happen in the next election, majority or minority.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I want to put this in context. We've had a lot of rhetoric here today, but what this is really about is the children. I'd like to focus on a particular riding, my riding, and tell you what's happening in my riding. We have a number of schools that have been scheduled for closure, schools that have a history in the riding, that are very important to the riding. Interestingly enough, they're all along the corridor on Wilson Avenue, a corridor that houses Downsview public school, Ancaster public school, Calico public school, Highview public school, Elia Middle school and Pierre Laporte Middle school. Some 2,000 children go to these schools. Interestingly enough, as these schools are preparing to fight the closure order against them, there is a proposed development coming into the heart of Downsview, on the Downsview air force base, that will see some 400 housing units that will come in there.

The hardships on my riding will be very difficult to bear, so the whole community has banded together. I want the Minister of Education to know that the community is united against the closure of any of these schools, which provide a very important service to the diversity that is Downsview, to people of all cultures and backgrounds who come to these schools and who need the schools in their midst and don't want their children bused to incredible lengths in order to get a proper education.

We will fight this. The community has met. We've had public meetings. We will continue to have working groups. I can tell you that there is no way that this Minister of Education is going to close any of our schools and hurt any of our kids.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm pleased to rise on this bill. It's particularly poignant in my community because, as I speak right now, the students from W.D. Lowe are gathering at their school to take a bus trip to the local school board office because tonight the local school board is voting on whether or not to close W.D. Lowe high in Windsor.

Our school board does not have a choice. It doesn't have an option because the funding formula is such that it prejudices older buildings, it prejudices buildings that are in centres of old communities. The school board trustees — do you know who they're led by? They're led by Jim Cooke.

1750

Mr Bartolucci: Who's Jim Cooke?

Mr Duncan: Jim Cooke is the brother of Dave Cooke. You remember Dave Cooke. Dave Cooke was the educa-

tion minister under the NDP, and until a year ago he was their education critic. What is Dave Cooke doing today? He's working for Mike Harris — after they closed 100 schools while they were in government — and it's Jim Cooke, his brother, who made the motion to close this school, who hasn't spoken up against this government's plans, who is leading that charge in Windsor.

I close by saying to the students at W.D. Lowe — I joined them last Friday at their candlelight vigil and their rally — I was proud to walk with them. That school should not be closed. It has a unique history, a unique contribution. I regret that it's come to the fact that tonight they're voting to close it because of that government's funding formula and because of the indifference of certain trustees in the school board who aren't willing to fight this government, who aren't willing to stand up for their community: Jim Cooke and his brother Dave Cooke.

Mr Bradley: I was going to concentrate entirely on the government and all the problems with the government. Then somebody handed me my copy of *Labour of Love* by Buzz Hargrove. *Labour of Love*, just as *Giving Away a Miracle*, by George Ehling and Wayne Roberts; *The Three Questions*, by Bob Rae; and Tom Walkom's book, *Rae Days*, all talk about the social contract. I don't want to get into the details of the social contract, because that's not what this resolution is about. But all of them talk about the social contract because the one thing —

Mr Cullen: Why don't you talk about things that affect the public?

Mr Bradley: I hear Benedict Arnold from the back row.

I want to say that in all of these, one thing they said that you could always count on with the NDP was that they would support the sanctity of the collective agreement. As Buzz Hargrove says, they were willing to cave in on that. Even though they had received the money and the support from the trade union movement, from the brothers and sisters, when it came down to the crunch, Buzz says, they were prepared to make that compromise. That's why when I hear my good friend from Hamilton Centre launch an attack about what they would do and what they wouldn't do, I worry because I remember how important the collective agreement was.

Let me get to the resolution. We have seen now the implementation of a policy which we could all see coming. Those of us who spoke on Bill 160 recognized that one of the consequences of Bill 160, some of the fallout, would be a massive closing of schools in the province. Indeed, up to two weeks ago we were going to see hundreds of schools closing not only all around Ontario but even in the greater Toronto area.

Mike Harris and his advisers were watching daily, seeing the bad publicity they were getting, everywhere from Killaloe to Kapuskasing and Etobicoke to St Catharines —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Only one member has the floor.

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for calming the crowd.

They could all see it coming. We could see when Bill 160 passed, despite the fact that the parson stood in the House, the Minister of Education, and assured everyone that we wouldn't see any school closings, we could see massive school closings.

What did they do? Tom Long phoned up and said: "You can't allow this to happen. You're being battered daily on television, in the newspapers. We've got to do something about it." The man who always stands firm sounded the bugle of retreat. You could hear the "beep, beep, beep" as the truck was backing up. The white flag was going. They were totally capitulating and I was happy to see it. I complimented the government on totally capitulating as soon as the pressure came on them over the closing of schools, because we could see that they were destroying communities by closing these schools. They thought that all that happened in schools in places such as Hastings and Etobicoke was that there was some formal education taking place. They found out that our school buildings are used for far more than that. The Girl Guides and the Boy Scouts have their activities there. The seniors come in to use these buildings. There's a square dance class that's there. There are all kinds of public activity within these buildings. And people wanted their kids, particularly in the elementary schools, to go to the local school. We have day care and nursery now taking place and we all know what Fraser Mustard has had to say as to how important junior kindergarten is, early access to education for these young children.

They finally recognized, after everybody was out there — the children were out there, the parents were out there, everybody associated with education and sympathetic to education was out there — with a sign saying, "Don't close our schools."

Mike Harris, the big tough guy, saw that he had a fight he couldn't win, so he figured he would throw the money at it for a year at least, calm it down. Then the Tories could go out, the Tories who are the apologists, and say: "Oh, see, it's all solved. Don't worry. The schools aren't going to close." But we know that with the specific funding formula for schools, a very odd funding formula, I might add, a totally unrealistic funding formula as it related to school and school space, we saw —

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): Arbitrary.

Mr Bradley: Arbitrary, as my friend from Yorkview says. It is simply going to result in schools closing unnecessarily.

This doesn't say that somewhere in Ontario there isn't going to be a school closed some time, but it was because of the specific funding formula of Mike Harris — I see Mike Harris. Mike Harris's funding formula did this.

I know the Premier. He did a reversal on this. He headed backwards on this and those tanks that were in battle were backed up. He understood not that his policy was wrong, but he understood that this might affect his chance for re-election.

Just as we recognize that within the school system there would be, as the Minister of Education said in the hallway one day, 7,500 positions that would disappear — notice I'm saying "positions" which would disappear within the school system. Even though there are new people coming in and they talk about a shortage now of teachers, that number of positions, said the Minister of Education in the hallway in the Whitney Block, would disappear.

What we have out there is disruption, what we have out there is disunity, what we have out there is instability in the education system. We have fights that are being precipitated between teachers and boards and elementary and secondary and some people in post-secondary and so on. The real problem is here at Queen's Park.

As a child, you will remember very well the game of pin the tail on the donkey. I'm going to tell you where the donkey is. I'm not saying this in an unkind way but in a symbolic way. If you want to pin the tail on the donkey, you have to come to this building. It's in the office of the Premier, in this case. I'm not saying the Premier is. I'm saying that's where you have to pin the tail on the government — I'll say on the government — of Mike Harris, rather than one individual. I don't want to insult any individual. That's what this resolution is about.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Fort William, Mrs McLeod, has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I didn't hear any no. I'm going to ask the question again.

The member for Fort William, Mrs McLeod, has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1800 to 1805.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Cullen, Alex	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Miclash, Frank
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Morin, Blain K.
Brown, Michael A.	Grandmaître, Bernard	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Gravelle, Michael	Pouliot, Gilles
Castrilli, Annamarie	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Lessard, Wayne	Silipo, Tony
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Wood, Len
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Parker, John L.

Carroll, Jack
Chudleigh, Ted
Cunningham, Dianne
Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Grimmett, Bill
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie

Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Johnson, David
Jordan, W. Leo
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Leadston, Gary L.
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
McLean, Allan K.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Newman, Dan

Preston, Peter
Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Runciman, Robert W.
Sheehan, Frank
Smith, Bruce
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Turnbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Villeneuve, Noble
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 35; the nays are 50.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1808.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Soins de longue durée, ministre délégué aux affaires des personnes âgées	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Eglinton	Saunderson, William (PC)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président		
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)	St Catharines-Brock St George-St David	Froese, Tom (PC) Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Nepcan	Baird, John R. (PC)	Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
Nickel Belt	Morin, Blain K. (NDP)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Scarborough Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaitre, Bernard (L)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (ND)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
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Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
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Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	York Mills	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)		

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 24 November 1998

Mardi 24 novembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 November 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 novembre 1998

The House met at 1832.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIRNESS FOR PROPERTY TAXPAYERS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LE TRAITEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES CONTRIBUABLES DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 79, An Act to amend the Assessment Act, Municipal Act, Assessment Review Board Act and Education Act in respect of property taxes / *Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière, la Loi sur les municipalités, la Loi sur la Commission de révision de l'évaluation foncière et la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne l'impôt foncier.*

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I was involved in this debate yesterday afternoon when 6 o'clock arose and in the 12 minutes or so that I've got this evening to finish the debate as far as my party is concerned, I would just like to once again reiterate some of the major points that have already been made, but I think need to be said again.

This is the seventh tax bill. The province of Ontario has created absolute chaos as far as the property taxpayer out there is concerned. No one truly understands this Bill 79. We've had situations where clerks and treasurers are going to have to hire consultants to deal with all the implications of this. Let me just quote to you something to give you an idea of how the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario feels about this. I'll just read to you from their latest publication in which they say:

"As previously mentioned, the AMCTO," the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, "cautions that administrative chaos was inevitable in 1997 due to the government's insistence on proceeding with Bill 106 at the time. By it's very nature, municipal property tax legislation is complex. However, with each subsequent piece of legislation amending the previously adopted legislation, the level of complexity is heightened. Bill 79," the current bill we're discussing this evening, "is by far the most difficult of the six acts passed thus far relating to property taxation to understand.

"We," the clerks and treasurers, "are responsible for the implementation of this legislation. We are current with

the various pieces of legislation now in force, but even we have problems understanding this bill. How is the general population going to understand what is being proposed?"

The general population doesn't understand because as the member for Huron made so abundantly clear yesterday in the example she gave of a commercial taxpayer in this province where the taxes went up from \$12,000 to \$17,000 yet the assessment only went up by 5%, she couldn't explain it. The government line is: "Blame the local councils. They're the people who are increasing your taxes by 30% or 40%."

But we know better. It's a result of the accumulation of a lot of these activities, a result of the restructuring that's taken place in a lot of municipalities and a result of the shifting assessment bases within those municipalities, because even the taxpayer I was just talking about whose taxes went up from \$12,000 to \$17,000 is not going to find any relief under this act. What this act says is that if as a result of an increase in assessment value your taxes go up 10%, then there's some relief for you for the amount over the 10%. But this particular taxpayer talked about the assessment only going up by 5%, then there's absolutely no relief under this act.

Then of course there's looking at it from the view of the people who have to pay more according to the new assessment system that has been adopted by the province. What the province hasn't talked about at all are the people who have gotten a tax bill in commercial properties for lower amounts than they paid before as a result of reduced assessment, who are now going to get another tax bill yet in 1998 and they're going to be told: "I'm sorry, but remember your taxes went down by X number of dollars" — let's say \$2,000. "We have to make up for the fact that a lot of people over and above the 10% are not going to pay that as a result of this new legislation. We have to make up that difference in money for the municipality by in effect clawing back the decrease that you were entitled to." I can tell you that the average business individual who is going to get a bill again after they've already paid their bill for this year is going to be mighty upset.

But let's go on and deal with another section that the clerks and treasurers brought forward. Here's another quote from their documentation — and you've got to remember, this is the organization that on a day-to-day basis deals with the taxation situation in a particular municipality. What do they say? They say:

"Bill 79 is a poorly designed tool that has been ill conceived for the purpose of solving a minority of problems for which the AMCTO, along with AMO and

MFOA, has offered other, more manageable and less costly solutions. Our proposed solutions have never received a response from the government. Instead, Bill 79 was introduced and effective consultations on workable solutions were no longer an option."

You may recall, as was pointed out yesterday, the clerks and treasurers and the city managers' association of Ontario came to this government 19 months ago and said to them, "If you want to do something about the system, why don't we work with you?" As a matter of fact, they even set up a panel of experts to deal with the kinds of situations that all these various tax bills are addressing and they could have given the government the solutions. They could have eased it in in a much more rational and systematic fashion.

What did this government do? The government didn't even acknowledge that they existed. They didn't even acknowledge the fact that here were the bureaucrats who work with these things on a day-to-day basis, that maybe they could give them a hand in coming up with the solutions that they were looking for; they totally ignored them.

In the five minutes that I've got left, I want to just deal with one other situation and this deals with — and it's typical of what's happening in a number of different areas where amalgamations and annexations have taken place. I'm reading here from a document that was produced to me by the Rural Ratepayers Association of the Town of Greater Napanee. Greater Napanee was formed sometime last year and it included both Napanee, North and South Fredericksburgh townships and the township of Adolphustown. I have a chart here which deals with the change in taxation for 1998. Let me just show you what has happened here as a result of the assessment changes.

1840

In Adolphustown, for residential tax purposes, the amount that is collected by Greater Napanee this year is \$279,000; I'm rounding these off in thousands of dollars. Do you know what it was in 1997? It was \$108,000. In South Fredericksburgh the taxation that has been received from the residential taxpayers in 1998 is \$243,000. Do you know how much it was in 1997? It was \$33,000. That's an increase of 626%. In North Fredericksburgh the taxation received in 1998 is \$644,000. What was it last year? It was \$427,000. Who's the winner in all this? Napanee? Their 1997 level of taxation for residential purposes was \$1.8 million. What is it this year? It's \$1 million.

The total amount that has been collected for residential purposes is the same once you combine the six municipalities. But what has happened as a result of the assessment changes for residential purposes is that the outlying areas, the townships, are paying a much greater share than they did before. Remember, these individuals are not at all helped by Bill 79, because this bill only deals with commercial and industrial taxpayers; it doesn't deal with residential taxpayers.

You can well imagine the anguish that an organization like the rural ratepayers of the town of Greater Napanee

feels about this kind of a situation. They simply cannot understand why the taxes on their homes in individual situations, where in some cases the assessment has even gone down, have gone up by anywhere from 80% to 100% to 120% to 150%.

Try to sell the benefits of amalgamation to those rural residents. They know they're not going to get the same services as you would in the urban part of Napanee. Some of these people live anywhere, and I'm just guessing here, from 10 to 15 miles, or 25 kilometres, from the urban centre of Napanee; maybe not 25, but let's say 20 kilometres from the urban centre. They are not going to get the average kind of municipal, urban services that you and I are used to, yet their taxes have gone up by 100% to 150% because of these assessment shifts.

My main reason for pointing this out is, first of all, the unfairness as to what has happened here and the absolutely poor way in which this whole program is being implemented. But the other thing about this is just the fact that it doesn't make sense, because these people are now paying for services that they're not going to receive. Remember, this was all sold to them on the basis that if we just allow for larger amalgamations, larger restructuring, then there will be all sorts of money saved, we'll get rid of a whole bunch of politicians, because, after all, it's the local politicians that cost all the money. They're the people who really spend all the money.

I bet you that the average salary of one of these rural politicians is probably somewhere around \$10,000 to \$15,000, just a drop in the bucket when you look at all the other costs that are involved here. But that's how Mike Harris tried to sell this: "We'll have these amalgamations, we'll cut out all the administrative costs, we'll cut the politicians down" — I think by about two thirds in this particular case, and in many other areas of the province as well — "because somehow we'll have the people of Ontario believing that that's where the real saving is."

Yet what has happened to these people? Their taxes have gone up by 100% to 150%. Don't take my word for it. Give them a call. Give the Rural Ratepayers Association of Greater Napanee a call, or give many of the other ratepayers' organizations in this province a call, and you'll find out that as a result of a lot of your restructuring and amalgamation in this province and as a result of these ill-conceived and badly implemented tax bills etc, you have been totally unfair to the people of Ontario, whom you theoretically wanted to benefit with all of the various tax savings that are involved.

I say, do what the AMCTO recommends and withdraw this bill. Don't cause greater confusion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Comments and questions?

Mr Blain K. Morin (Nickel Belt): I would like to thank the member for Kingston and The Islands for bringing up some of the important points and important issues in and around Bill 79. As the member said, this government's mishandling of the property tax reform is almost getting out of hand. This is the seventh property tax bill they've put forward, each an attempt to correct this

government's mishandling of the way they've downloaded on to municipalities in the province of Ontario.

This legislation once again means a lot of uncertainty to municipalities across the province. I take an example, as the member did, this time from northern Ontario and the regional municipality of Sudbury. A quote from them: "The proposed legislation is a broad-brush approach that is not applicable to all municipalities in Ontario." My colleague Mr Bisson will highlight some of the problems we've had in northern Ontario with another callous attempt at fixing something that wasn't broken and another callous attempt to download to municipalities. And who gains? It certainly isn't the people in northern Ontario. It certainly isn't the people of Chappleau, where they're talking about their property taxes rising by \$600 per household for the simple thing of police services.

You will see as we debate this issue tonight the real implications of another mishandled attempt by the government and Mr Eves. I look forward to the debate tonight.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond not only to the remarks by my colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands but by the first speaker for the official opposition, Mr Phillips, from Scarborough-Agincourt.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt went on at great length in his remarks and talked about the powers of the Assessment Review Board. I think it's important to put on the record that the powers for the Assessment Review Board contained in the act to deal with frivolous complaints are powers that exist in the parallel structure with the Ontario Municipal Board. It's part of the agencies reform commission report adopted by the government, chaired by my colleague the member for Ottawa-Rideau and on which I had the opportunity to serve. It was an opportunity to try to streamline the adjudicative and administrative justice system in Ontario, and that was one of the recommendations we came up with. But these are powers already contained in the Municipal Act, and it's important to put that on the record.

Second, with respect to the Supreme Court decision, I think what the Supreme Court said with respect to the probate laws was that they were called fees, not taxes, and that the fees set by regulation far exceeded the cost of doing them and amounted to a tax. That was the basis of the decision, not the fact that the tax rates were set by regulation. If you check the results, I think you'll find that to be the case.

Third, the member went on at great length about tax policy. We've seen nothing today with respect to the official opposition's tax policy. I saw the member for Ottawa West on television yesterday, very pointedly saying that the Liberal Party has no policies, that they won't come clean. We know that there are significant debates going on within the Liberal caucus on taxes. I have an article from *Now* magazine which quotes MPP Gerard Kennedy. "MPP Gerard Kennedy says he and some other caucus members favour a reconsideration of the position that they will 'maintain the fiscal framework,' McGuinty's words for keeping the Tory tax cuts in place."

Mr Gerretsen: What's the date of that?

Mr Baird: That's from just a few short months ago, after your retreat in Collingwood.

Mr Gerretsen: No, that's about a year old.

Mr Baird: It's 1998. It's saying they're not coming clean, saying they really plan to raise taxes. Shame on them, Madam Speaker.

1850

Mr Blain Morin: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Could you check and see if we have a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm always delighted to comment on speeches made by the member for Kingston and The Islands, especially when it has to do with municipal issues. As a long-time councillor and mayor in Kingston, he brings to us an understanding of these issues that really assist members in the House in making useful decisions.

In talking about the bill, I'm sure Mr Gerretsen would want to know that in the town of Espanola, the clerk is apoplectic about this bill. This bill is going to cause the town of Espanola a huge amount of concern, as they have to reconsider all the commercial tax bills that have been sent out. For a relatively small town like Espanola, they may be on the hook for a large number of dollars as this all washes out, because in essence much of this will not happen until into the new year. There are some real problems in some of the smaller towns.

I bet that you over on the other side don't know this, but there are many townships I represent that haven't sent out a tax bill this year. They don't exist. I've had people call my office and ask, "Mike, should I appeal my assessment? How do I do it? I don't have a tax bill, so I really can't understand whether I'll be paying more or paying less." It doesn't exist. We are, what, five weeks away from the end of the year and they haven't received a municipal tax bill this year. It makes making decisions, on their part, almost impossible.

You guys can't get anything right. This should make you ashamed. This is mismanagement at a level that is just colossal.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I'm pleased to stand up and make comments on the presentation, the well-presented comments by the member for Kingston and The Islands, with his background as the former mayor of the city of Kingston. I have a lot of empathy for the municipalities, having served both at the city of Ottawa and the region. The municipalities are simply apoplectic about this now — and I have to correct the member for Kingston and The Islands. This is not the seventh initiative by the government to correct the property tax mess it has created; it

is actually the eighth initiative. I'll go through the list later on.

I have here some quotations from some municipal officials in Ottawa-Carleton. The mayor of Gloucester, Mayor Claudette Cain, said: "They've really lost it this time," and she's referring to the government. "The ones who will be most upset are those expecting a tax decrease. They're not going to be happy. I can tell you that. They're going to freak."

"We have to start over. It's a total fiasco. Robbing Peter to pay Paul doesn't get anybody anywhere."

Here's a quote from the chair of the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton: "We will not be able to achieve a zero tax increase if there are no changes from the province. We can't be miracle workers under these circumstances." That's what the regional chair said.

The mayor of the city of Ottawa said: "We've worked hard to create financial stability in this city but this will have a devastating impact on our city and taxpayers. It's going to have a crippling effect on the city budget. Mr Eves doesn't realize how horrific this will be on our taxpayers."

What does Michael Power, the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, say? "It's a mess." Every time we run into a mess you put on a band-aid. Every time you put on a band-aid the blood leaks around the other end. So we find another band-aid solution and another one and another one.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I thank all those people who intervened. I would just like to correct the member for Nepean. If he reads section 29 of the decision he mentioned, the judge clearly states that you cannot have taxation without representation. He was not talking about fees; he was talking about the ability to tax. I would suggest to the government you take a look at your Bill 160 which allows you to get a whole bunch of, almost \$6 billion worth of, tax dollars out of the education portion from the property taxpayer. You'll find out that's what taxation is.

I think the people of Ontario ought to understand that in your property tax bill anywhere from 40% to 60% of that bill is a tax levy set in secret by the Treasurer by way of regulation. He has to collect \$6 billion for educational purposes from the property tax bill. There has been a suggestion made in many municipalities that the amount of dollars that the province is getting from the property taxpayers for education purposes is much more than what they used to get when it was levied by the boards of education.

This explains as well why, in some areas when assessments have gone down and the total taxation level for a municipality, let's say, has gone up by 5%, some people whose assessment went down are still paying 20% to 25% more than last year. It may very well be that in their particular case what they're paying for educational tax dollars is a lot more than what they used to when the boards of education used to charge those taxes. It's something that isn't talked about very much in here, but there

are so many factors that go into this that clerks and treasurers are confused, the general public is confused. I would just say to the general public: "Don't be fooled. Don't blame your local councils. Put the blame squarely on the Mike Harris government. They've downloaded the whole bunch of services. It's their fault."

Mr Cullen: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I fail to see a quorum in this House. Could you please check.

The Acting Speaker: Could you check to see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: A quorum is now present.

Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would ask for the following. We will be splitting our leadoff, and I seek unanimous consent to stand down the remaining portion of what will be left afterwards so our critic will be able to complete the debate tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent to stand down the second half until tomorrow or when we next debate this? Agreed.

Mr Bisson: I'm going to be really sad that members won't have an opportunity to comment on the dissertation I will give over the next 30 minutes. If I've heard anything in my riding of Cochrane South and other places — I was in Ottawa on the weekend and I met with municipal politicians there; I've talked to people from the Peterborough area; I've talked to people from all parts of this province, and they've all got one thing in common: They think you guys are absolutely nuts when it comes to property taxes.

Municipal politicians — and it doesn't matter what the stripe is, Conservative, New Democrat or Liberal — are looking at this provincial government and saying: "My Lord, what are these guys up to? They've messed up this whole property tax assessment system." It's to the point that even the people who are responsible for sending out the tax bills, the administrators and others who work within the tax department, at times don't know what the heck's going on. Because the government is changing the rules so fast, they've got no idea what the heck to do from one minute to the other.

Other members will talk about this. This is bill number 8 in a long litany of bills that this government has brought before the House to deal with property tax assessment. Do you know what? They don't even have it right after the eighth bill.

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I've got to ask myself what it is with this government, what is it that they don't get? They've gone ahead and they've changed the assessment system across the province to the point that most municipal politicians are saying: "We don't want it. This thing doesn't work. It's impractical. It's a problem for our municipalities." I'll lay some of that out in my 30 minutes. But more importantly, the taxpayers don't like it.

In my riding, as it is probably in Mr Cullen's riding or my good friend Mr Morin's riding, people in our community, such as in Tory ridings, are upset because they're seeing their property taxes increase as a result of not only what government has done in assessment but what they've done with the whole downloading agenda.

I think of people like Urgel Gravelle from Dumont motors, who called me up sometime earlier this summer when he was faced with his tax bill. He was going to get a 127% increase in municipal taxes over last year as a result of what this government did in property taxes when it comes to municipal government and when it comes to education.

I think of Mr Mascioli, the Mascioli family that owns Timmins Garage. I think of Mr Bazuik. I think of a number of business owners across the city of Timmins who are seeing their taxes going up anywhere from 80% to about 130% at the highest. They came to me and they said, "Gilles, what the heck is going on?" I said: "Listen, most business people probably have a larger affinity with this government than I do. You figure it out."

We in the NDP and the other opposition party have been trying to tell people that the government has messed this up, and if they're going to fix it, they've got to slow down, put the brakes on and fix this once and for all and take their time and do it right. But this government never did that. Every time another problem crops up, oops, they come in with another piece of legislation and they say they're going to fix it. I guess this is called the oops bill. This is oops bill 7. It's actually the eighth time we've had a bill in here, but it's the seventh bill to fix the original problem when they set it up eight bills ago. So I guess we can call this the oops bill.

I want to put on the record a letter that my good friend Mr Blain Morin got from the municipality of Chapleau. I know if he had had the opportunity to speak more fully tonight he would have raised this issue, because I had to rattle him away from here, as the deputy House leader, to make sure we had proper speaking order. Blain has gracefully given me, as the critic, his time. It's always good, as the critic, to get some time in these debates. I know Blain and other members of our caucus will be speaking on this later on during the debate.

I want to raise something. He talked about what's happening in northern Ontario. We're just going to give you one idea. This is a letter that comes from the office of the reeve of the town of Chapleau, dated November 4, and it's quite interesting. They say in here:

"With the passing of the October 31, 1998 appeal deadline, we have completed our first review of assessment settlement under section 39.1 of the Assessment Act." We're talking, of course, of the Assessment Act that the Tories have put in place. It says, "Of the approximately 50 settlements we have received we see none which leaves any grounds for the municipality to appeal. All of the adjustments are as a result of assessment errors." That's a pretty strong comment, coming from municipalities in northern Ontario, just one municipality. "On this matter we wish to make one point emphatically

clear. We are not assigning any blame to the staff of the assessment office which completed this work. The fault clearly lies with those who set the timelines for the completion of the reassessment activity. It is clear that this problem arose as a result of inadequate time to prepare detailed reviews of the assessments generated by the exercise," and that was the decision of the Mike Harris government.

They're saying you guys wanted to change the assessment system overnight. You wanted to reassess the entire province of Ontario because you had to move Toronto to market value assessment. But oops, you couldn't call it market value assessment, so you called it actual value assessment and you imposed that on the rest of the province even though we were already assessed on market value. Boy, what a bunch of — I can't say the words that come to mind, Madam Speaker, because it would be unparliamentary.

The point is that municipalities like Chapleau, residents in communities across this province and other municipalities are saying the same thing. You guys have basically rushed this whole system through. You tried to change the assessment system in one year. You told the assessors to go out and do a job that they told you couldn't be done in a year. They told you: "Listen, if you try to force the assessment into a one-year period, you're going to get stuck with so many errors that you're going to have a whole bunch of people appealing their assessment. It won't be as a result of the assessment rules; it'll be due to the assessment being done too quickly and not being able to do it properly." That's what we're now seeing. As a result, there's a cost associated to municipalities, and they're having a problem, quite frankly, figuring out exactly how much money they're going to have at the end of this.

Some people watching are going to say, "What does it mean to me that a municipality doesn't know exactly how much money it has got?" Think about what your municipality pays for. They're the people who clean your streets and make sure that the snow is off them in the winter. They're the people who repair the roads in the summer and the sidewalks to make sure that we have somewhat of an infrastructure in our community. They run your parks, your swimming pool, your arena, your daycare in most cases. They now run public health because this government downloaded that to them. They run a whole bunch of services that people rely on because they are there to deliver the services to the people who reside in their communities. The point I make is, if municipalities are unsure about how much assessment they're going to have in the end, it's fairly difficult for them to draw up a particularly good budget.

I want to also get the comments of somebody else from northern Ontario: Austin Davey, who a number of you might know from the Sudbury region. I never thought I would see the day in this province where people like Austin Davey in any media anywhere in Ontario are saying bad things about the Tory government. I know there are a number of people out there who have a certain

political persuasion — it might not be mine — and would like to support this Tory government, but even your own supporters are having a real problem trying to support you when it comes to the municipal assessment mess that you've created. I just want to put on the record — and this comes from, I believe, the Sudbury Star. It's actually Northern Life. I would think Sudbury Star, because we know that paper's very important in Sudbury, but Northern Life, dated October 30, 1998.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: It certainly is as well. Do you notice that all the local politicians are trying to get their newspapers into this thing?

You've got to listen to this because this is Austin Davey speaking. This is quite interesting. He says, "It's unfair to change the rules with five minutes left in the fourth quarter." He's talking about this whole fiasco in assessments. "It's like giving everyone a basketball and sending them into a hockey rink. Every budget in the region is now wrong. They, the provincial government, knew about this last February. I'm not going to pay for their stupidity."

This is Austin Davey saying this, and it goes on: "It will be 100 years before any Conservatives are elected north of Parry Sound if this goes through." Davey notes that, "This is the Harris government's second big lie. The first lie was revenue-neutrality." This is not me saying this; this is one of the local politicians in northern Ontario who's saying that this government — well, I can't say what he said because it would be unparliamentary, but I read it.

Mr Michael Brown: Go ahead, read it.

Mr Bisson: No, I can't.

Mr Blain Morin: You should read the quote again.

Mr Bisson: I can read the quote. "The first lie was revenue-neutrality," was what he said, because people heard Mike Harris, who said: "All of this is going to be revenue-neutral. It's not going to cost the municipalities any more money." Local politicians are saying, "Not only is this assessment thing all mixed up and the problems that's causing for everybody, but this whole process that you went into, the Who Does What, is not revenue-neutral, as you told us." You've really got to wonder at one point what the heck these guys are up to.

I thought to myself maybe the Tories made a mistake. Could it be that the Tories made a mistake when they introduced this legislation? I took the time and went and got the American College Dictionary and decided to look up the word "mistake" to find out so that I would properly understand what the word "mistake" means when it comes to this debate. If you read the dictionary, it says, "mistake: a mistake, grave or trivial, is caused by bad judgment or a disregard of rules or principles."

Is that what's happened over here? Has the government in this particular case exercised bad judgment and disregarded rule and principle when it came to how they dealt with the assessment system? I wonder. It goes on to say that a mistake is also sometimes called a blunder. Is it number two, a blunder? A blunder is "a careless, stupid or

gross mistake in action or in speech suggesting awkwardness or heedlessness." In this case either the government made a mistake or they made a blunder. We've got to figure out which one it is before we go further.

We go on and it says: "A mistake can also be defined as an error. An error is sometimes interchanged with the word 'mistake,' but in any event it means 'an unintentional wandering or deviation from accuracy'" — that's interesting — "'or right conduct' or basically an error in judgment." Is it that you people, as they suggest in the dictionary, unintentionally wandered a little bit or had somewhat of a deviation from accuracy?

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That brings us back to the point of Austin Davey and his comment when he says, "The first lie was revenue-neutrality." I wonder if that was what he was getting at. Is it an error, or is it in the end, as they say here in dictionary — a mistake can also be defined as "a slip, usually a minor mistake made through haste or carelessness or a slip of the tongue." Could it be that Mr Harris had a slip of the tongue when he said all of this was going to be revenue-neutral?

Mr Cullen: No, no, his son looked him in the eye and asked him.

Mr Bisson: That's true. I'd forgotten. My good friend Mr Cullen reminds me. It was a pinky-swear. I remember. I was there, I was at the Ontario Municipal Association meeting, and I remember the Premier of Ontario saying that. Very good; I'd forgotten that. He said, "I looked at my son and my son looked at me and he said, 'Is this really going to be revenue-neutral?'" Mike Harris went like that and he said, "Pinky-swear: It's going to be revenue-neutral." Well, it says here that a mistake — and we know that what the government has done is a mistake. They're eight pieces of legislation into the problem. The dictionary says "a slip, usually a minor mistake made through haste or carelessness or a slip of the tongue." Could it be that Mr Harris made a slip of the tongue? Could it be? I wonder, I just wonder. I again look at what Austin Davey has said. "Davey noted, 'This is the Harris government's second big lie. The first lie was revenue-neutrality.'" So I really wonder.

But the point is that we certainly know the government has messed up the situation, and now they're once again trying to find a way to fix a problem after they created the big problem in the first place. We've got to wonder, what do we do in this case? On the one hand, we're kind of glad that they're putting the cap in place, because at least that'll protect some people, but what's the cost of the cap? Everybody in the Legislature knows what it means, but most people watching the debate will wonder: "What does this all mean for me? I am a working person," a teacher or a lawyer or whatever, "and I'm sitting at home today watching the debate and wondering what this bill means for me." Well, what they're doing with this bill is they're trying to cap the problem they created in property taxes by changing the assessment system as it relates to businesses. They're saying: "Oops, we made a mistake. There's been

a blunder. There's been an error. We did something wrong."

We know that municipalities, because of this new assessment system now, were forced by the province to send out huge tax bills, 100% to 120% more than they paid last year. So the government says: "Jeez, we've got to do something. We messed up. What are we going to do? We'll freeze the property taxes. That's what we'll do. We'll pass a piece of legislation in the House, because we've got a majority, and we'll freeze those property taxes at 10% this year and 5% for each of the two years after that."

Mr Cullen: Who'll make up the difference?

Mr Bisson: Ah, my good friend Mr Cullen from Ottawa asks, who makes up the difference? Two categories: First, do you remember all those people who were going to get a tax decrease? There are businesses in my community that were going to get a decrease, especially in the downtown core. In the downtown core of the city of Timmins, they were finally going to get a little bit of a break when it came to their taxes, and quite frankly they were kind of happy about that. They said, "If I've got to pay less tax, I'm happy."

Now they're finding out that they're not going to get the tax decrease that the government promised them. Instead of getting a 40% or 50% or 60% tax decrease, as some of them were — actually, I'm kind of happy that this happened: The Bank of Nova Scotia in Timmins was going down from \$120,000 a year in property taxes to \$27,000, but as a result of this legislation — well, that's another point, and I'll come back to that later. My point was that the government is going to cap the decrease in taxes that people get, so that's one class of people who are upset.

I'm now getting calls in my constituency office from people who were going to get a decrease, saying: "I'm not getting my decrease. I've got to pay for this blunder. How come?" I say, "Well, you know, that's the Mike Harris government. They can't take the time to do things properly. They've got to rush everything through the House." They don't want to listen to anybody, including their own bureaucrats who told them originally not to do this, but they didn't listen. The association of clerks said, "Don't do this; it's a fiasco," along with a whole bunch of other people, but Mike Harris, Al Leach, they're smart, they've got all the answers. The bright lights of the Tory cabinet and some of the backbenchers, like Mr Johnson over there and others, they had all the answers. "Let's go, Mike. We're going to get this done. This will work."

But there is another group who loses in this big time. We've only talked about those businesses that now don't get their decrease. You know who gets it square in the eyes? It's the middle class. The middle class is going to get it right between the eyes when it comes to this here, because this government, the way they've done this legislation, has seen fit to cap the businesses but they're not going to cap what's going to happen to residents across Ontario. In some areas people's property taxes are going to go up substantially because of the reassessment.

In some cases taxes will go down, there's no question, but in some municipalities individual property owners will see their taxes go up. Quite aside from what's happening with downloading, but because of the reassessment, they will find themselves in a position where their taxes will be going up.

One thing I'm hearing out there is that people in the middle class of this province are really feeling as if they're under threat by this government. They look at those programs that support them and their families, such as health care, where they see a system of health care that's slowly eroding, a system that's being underfunded, a system that is starting to respond less to the needs of the people and their families that are sick because of the problems.

I was in Ottawa last week and I remember meeting with I think it was M. Stéphane Émond-Chabot from the city of Ottawa, one of the aldermen, who said that apparently one of the reports that just came out showed that ambulance services in Ottawa have deteriorated as a result of what this government has done, and the response times are now really slow. In fact, somebody was quoted as saying, "You can order a pizza and get that quicker in Ottawa than you can get an ambulance," because of the response time.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: It was Mr Cullen himself who said that. I didn't know, but I thought it was a good line.

Mr Blain Morin: Shameful.

Mr Bisson: It's shameful. We shouldn't make fun of that. The reality is that there are people now in communities who are having a harder and harder time getting ambulances to come and respond to emergencies because of the downloading and because of the cuts the government has done to ambulance services and to municipalities.

I don't think the middle class will see that well come the next election. They look at the system of education and they say, "My kids are not going to be getting the kind of education at the primary and secondary level that they used to get as a result of what this government did." Over a period of time we're going to see less and less resources in the classroom. In fact you're going to see less and less classrooms. Why? Because you find yourself in a situation —

Mr Cullen: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think the member here has an excellent speech but we do not have, I believe, members sufficient to sustain a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, could you check to see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

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Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: As I was saying, when it comes to the municipal assessment bill, this government has rushed this process. The process has been flawed right from the beginning. They've rushed the entire process, they've made all kinds of mistakes, and we find ourselves now with the eighth piece of legislation that deals with municipal tax assessment in Ontario. I was outlining before the quorum call, because government members for whatever reason decided to leave — I don't think it's anything I said. I think they probably have their minds calling back to their constituents and saying: "What is the member for Cochrane South raising? Are people really that upset?" Go make those phone calls. I won't make a quorum call. People are upset.

Like I said, this last week I was in Ottawa. I've been in Peterborough, I've been in Hearst, I've been in Cochrane, different municipalities, Iroquois Falls, you name it, and people are upset. Why? Because they're seeing what this government is doing vis-à-vis this whole change of assessment system and they're seeing that it's messed up. People will accept change. People are pretty resilient, they will accept change, but when a government can't get change right, I think the public loses its patience. That's what's happening in this particular case. I say it's the government's fault and I think the government should at least come clean and say: "We messed up. We made a mistake."

I was at the press conference when Ernie Eves was announcing what he was doing vis-à-vis this bill. One of the media people, I forget who it was, asked him, "Have you made a mistake?" He said; "No, no, I didn't make a mistake. It was all the municipalities' fault. We gave the municipalities the tools to fix this problem." My Lord, when the municipalities got the toolbox from Queen's Park and opened it up, they found a hammer and it said, "Hit yourself." That's the tool they got from the province of Ontario.

I don't know about you, Madam Speaker — as a matter of fact, I do know about you. I am sick and tired, as you are and a whole bunch of other members are, when it comes to this issue. People are sick and tired of the municipal level of government being told by the government of Ontario that this assessment problem and this tax problem are the fault of municipalities. They are sick and tired of it and they want this government to take responsibility for what it has done.

Was it the municipalities that changed the assessment system? No, it was the province. Was it the municipalities that started the downloading process? No, it was the provincial government. At every step, all of the problems that have been caused have been caused by the province, and you've got this government hiding behind the lines that Ernie Eves used when he announced this, his eighth, piece of legislation to try to fix the assessment fiasco, saying it's the municipalities' fault. I ain't going to stand for it; I don't think most members that are decent when it comes to their outlook on things will stand for a government blaming municipalities for a problem they didn't create, rather a problem that the government itself created.

It says something about this government, because this government tends to attack when it does something wrong or it's challenged. They're never wrong, but when they are cornered into finding out that maybe they did make a mistake, what do they do? They attack others. That's what they've done with these municipalities. They've said: "We attack you. It's your fault. It's you, the municipalities, and we've done nothing wrong." When I see issue after issue that's come through this Legislature, when people were upset about what was going on in education, they attacked the teachers. When people were upset about what happened with education, they attacked the trustees. They attack everybody out there to try to divert the attention from themselves.

What's really interesting is that we have the member for Norfolk, who's going to be bringing a bill into this House on Thursday, who is attacking his local regional government because they have had to increase taxes in his area of Norfolk by 17%. So this member, in the style of Conservatives that we have come to know in this Legislature, is turning around saying, "It's the regional government's fault if your taxes are going up by 17%." But again, was it the regional government of Norfolk that asked for the assessment changes? No. Was it the regional government of Norfolk that asked for all the downloading it got? No, not at all. Was it they who asked to have their transfer payments cut to the extent they were? Not at all. But as a result of all of that, they have had to increase taxes in that municipality, because of its unique situation, by 17% this year in order to maintain services in a municipality.

This Tory government member, the member for Norfolk, says: "I'm going to fix the problem. If the municipalities have a problem, have to do something about maintaining services, so they're increasing taxes" — if I was the member I would be at the cabinet table or I would be at the door of the cabinet, banging and saying: "Listen, we've got a problem. My municipality's in trouble. We need to do something to offset this problem. Is there some sort of adjustment we can make in their transfers." No. What does this government member decide to do? "Let's eliminate the regional level of government. That will fix the problem." He attacks his own municipalities as a defence for a problem that his government created.

Mr Cullen: He should talk to Ernie Eves.

Mr Bisson: That's exactly the point. I think what this member would be better doing is talking to the Minister of Finance, Mr Eves, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr Leach, and the Premier, Mr Harris, and say: "Listen, there is a problem. I was elected to represent the people of Norfolk. I'm finding out that the changes we've made in government are having negative effects on my municipalities and the services they deliver. I'm not going to stand up for that. I want to do something. I want this government to respond to their needs."

The member across the way says, "What would you have done?" I remember when I was in government. I remember some of the policies we took and the effect on the Timmins and District Hospital, actually a negative

effect. It turned out that if it had been implemented, the hospital would have had to shut down some of the services of the Timmins and District as a result of the decisions that were made by our Minister of Health.

I didn't go and attack the hospital. I didn't ask for a bill in the House to fire the hospital board. I didn't go out and try to attack the people who were running the hospital. I said, "There's a problem here. I see your point. There is a decision that has been made that on the surface looked pretty innocuous from our perspective, but that, when it comes to practice, doesn't work well. It's going to result in a problem." So what did I do? I remember I brought in the person who was then the head of the health board, Mr Alexander, who is from the community of Timmins. He was the president of the hospital board of the Timmins and District Hospital. I also brought the administrator of the hospital down. We met with — I don't think it was the Premier. I think we met with the Minister of Health and then we met with some bureaucrats within the Ministry of Health, and following from there I had a successive number of meetings with the Premier and with the Minister of Health, and as a result we red-circled that institution to make sure they kept the dollars necessary to offer services to our community.

I said, "Mr Premier, my responsibility is, yes, I'm a New Democrat and I'm elected to your government, but I have to advocate for my community." I went to the Premier and I got a deal for my community that benefited the people in my community. That was my job and that's what I did, and I'm proud of what I did. As it turned out, for those three years afterwards, our hospital didn't have to lay anybody off, they didn't have to cut services; in fact, they added services as a result of all of the negotiations we had between the government and the hospital board. And yes, the hospital board made some changes, but as a result, we strengthened our hospital.

But what does this government do? What the member for Norfolk is going to do is say: "There is a problem. The Tory government changes are going to negatively affect my local municipalities." Instead of trying to advocate for his communities, he is here with a bill saying, "I want to destroy the regional government that is out there trying to say bad things about our government."

It brings me back to this particular bill. This government has messed up. I think the least the government should do is, number one, admit they made a mistake. The path to recovery is always, first of all, to admit that you made a mistake. If you can acknowledge that you've made a mistake, you're halfway there. You're halfway to finding a solution. It opens you up to being able to discuss and to find solutions to what is the mistake.

But when you try to cover up the mistake by a barrage of legislation such as we've seen in this House over the last two years, eight pieces of legislation, it doesn't do anything to fix the problem. All they are doing is putting a band-aid on the problem, and people are still going to be bleeding once that band-aid has gone past its usefulness. It's going to be left to another government after this government is defeated, which I think will happen in the

next provincial election. Hopefully, with the support of the people of Ontario, it will be Howard Hampton as the Premier of Ontario, along with the NDP caucus, and we'll have good members like Mr Cullen and Mr Blain Morin there in the government. It will be up to us to come back and try to figure out how to untangle this mess that the government created.

I want to put on the record that it ain't going to be easy. This government managed, through eight pieces of legislation, to totally muck up the situation, so I think we're going to have to have a good attempt to find ways of saying who should properly deliver what services and what services should possibly be re-uploaded to the province; for example, housing. I think housing should be something we should take the heck out of municipal hands, because they don't have the means in a lot of cases, or the interest, to be able to deal with housing. Throw that up to the province; let the province do it properly. Look at what services would be better administered at the local level, and if in the end the conclusion is that welfare, housing, daycare and public health make more sense to be up at the provincial level, which I believe they do, then I think the province should be doing so. We should not be trying to balance our books on the backs of the municipalities. We complain about what Jean Chrétien did, and Brian Mulroney before him, when it comes to downloading on to the provinces. We should not be, on the other hand, downloading back on to the municipalities.

I want to raise one other point in the minute that I have left, very quickly. That's the issue of what is going to happen as a result of this bill and as a result of previous bills when it comes to assessment on vacant units within multi-unit rental units such as malls and larger buildings.

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I had a landlord in Kapuskasing come up to me and say, "Gilles, I just found out that if I rent out" — he has three units in this particular building, and if he rents out, for example, a unit on January 1, and that unit is vacated, let's say, three months later, if he does not give notice to the assessment board by November 1 of the next year that the unit is vacated, he will end up paying the entire cost of assessment on that unit as if it was filled, and every year after.

You say: "Well, what's wrong with that? The onus is on the landlord to notify what's going to happen." The problem for most of these landlords is that they are in a position, quite frankly, of having fairly long leases with the tenants that come open every four or five years, and they have no way of knowing if that unit will be vacated or not at the end of the lease. If the lease happens to come open sometime in the summer close to November, let's say August or September, in that area, they will have no means of remedying the situation once their units are vacated. As a result, they will end up having to pay municipal taxes on leased units that are empty.

Under the former system of assessment, you had an ability to have that changed retroactive to the point when the unit became vacant. This government is saying, "No, we want small business people in the province who own

buildings to pay full costs of leased units once they are vacated because we think we need to get the money to municipalities.” Don’t put this on the backs of the landlords in this case. I think it’s your responsibility as a province to fix that.

That’s all the time that I have. I look forward to the comments of other members of the Legislature, and I urge this government to do it right for once. Take your time. Try not to shove this legislation through so quickly that you don’t have an opportunity to make amendments that might make this legislation a little bit better.

Mr Blain Morin: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Once again, on such an important issue, I don’t believe we have quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Could you check and see if there is a quorum.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): It’s wondrous to behold the so-called debate we’ve had on this subject, the number of bills that have been presented on Bill 79.

I would like to start some analysis of how we got to this situation. I think it’s important to insert the appropriate context of why we are where we are today in the type of property assessment system in Ontario.

I found it interesting to go back and look at one of the expressed concerns made by members opposite, that is, how educational dollars are going to be spent and assessed today from the centre rather than from the school boards. One of the criticisms by members opposite is that there is sort of a nostalgic refrain to go back to the old ways. We can see it in some of the literature of the Toronto District School Board. It is interesting to note that when one looks at enrolment, expenditures, cost per pupil and general budgetary increases between 1970 and 1997, there are some very revealing numbers.

For example, under the old Metro school board, enrolment in 1970 was over 398,000 students. Gross expenditures back in those days were \$419,298,000, which averages out to a \$1,101 per pupil cost. Then we move to 1997. This is a fantastic, very revealing statistic. Enrolment in 1997 consisted of 305,000 students under the old Metro school board, yet expenditures amounted to \$2,249,961,000, for an average cost of \$7,698 per student.

If we look at the percentage increases between 1970 and 1980, we had a 170% increase. Every year for those 10 years it was 17%. From 1980 to 1990, we had a 14.3% increase every year, averaging out at 14%. In 1990 to 1995, for those five short years, we had 15% increases. From 1995 to 1997, we finally arrested this huge, billowing increase, down to a 0.75% increase. No wonder the taxpayers in the city of Toronto, or the old Metro, were terribly dissatisfied with the tax regime. Those numbers tell the story more than anything members

opposite want to cry about when it comes to having seven or eight tax adjustment bills.

That’s the context in which we operate and what we inherited today. When you have enrolment of nearly 400,000 students and it goes down to nearly 300,000, yet your expenditures, even if you take into account the inflation of the late 1970s and 1980s, end up at nearly \$2.5 billion, no wonder the taxpayers were saying: “Do something. Remove the taxing power of the boards of education from being able to continue this kind of despicable attack on taxpayers.” They talk about an attack on taxpayers. It was happening through all those years.

When we examine Bill 79 and we look for constructive suggestions, as the member for Durham East talked about yesterday, I went through the remarks by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. He is the particular guru of the official opposition on finance policy. He crunches the numbers. I thought perhaps he’d have a good idea on how we should deal with these issues. But lo and behold, I searched high and low for a kernel of reality, a kernel of a good idea, and all we found in all the remarks of the members opposite yesterday from the official opposition was a concern about the cash flow of the municipalities in terms of the adjustment increases or decreases, depending on the types of classes of property you’re dealing with, dealing with the techniques a given municipality might employ to deal with the shift in current value assessment.

Did we find anything else? Not really. Here’s what we found in remarks, repeated just recently by the member for Cochrane South: a litany of and moaning about who is to blame here.

Mr Cullen: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I believe the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale should have a quorum in the House to hear his comments.

The Acting Speaker: Could you check and see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, go ahead.

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Mr Hastings: Thank you, Speaker. I shall continue. Hopefully the member for Ottawa West, now that he’s in his new socialist positioning, can at least get the name of the riding correct. I don’t think I’m asking for too much, or has it affected his brainwaves? I hope that doesn’t continue.

Anyway, getting back to the subject at hand, it seems to me that when you look for kernels of alternative ideas, proposals, amendments — granted that the official finance critic did make some suggestions in earlier bills, but when I go through his more recent comments, they are pretty bereft of solid public policy on property tax assessment. There really isn’t much there. We get the usual litany of criticisms that this is the eighth bill or the seventh bill, which incidentally suggests that the members opposite in both parties are trying to have it both ways.

First off, they're saying, "Go slow, get it right." That's the member for Cochrane South; we just heard that a few minutes ago. When we do bring in sensitive bills to accommodate the difficulties that some municipalities are experiencing, they turn around and say these particular techniques won't work, they're not in touch with reality.

What we need to do is ask this fundamental question: Why is it that, despite many differences and disagreements I have with many members of the city of Toronto council, the city of Toronto, when it went through this exercise last spring in its first budget year as an amalgamated city, at least got right the capping exercise, the 2.5% cap on commercial-industrial properties for the next three years? Why was it so difficult — and this has nothing to do with blaming people. We're talking about a fundamental reality here. Why wasn't it possible for the clerks and treasurers in the respective municipalities and regional governments that face the same types of problems as we had in the city of Toronto to go and talk to the finance ministry or to the treasurer of the city of Toronto to see what they had done right and take some of their advice?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa West, come to order. I can still hear you over there.

Mr Hastings: Why do the members opposite persist in ignoring that the largest population of the largest centre in urban Ontario did get it right in this particular case? They totally ignore that situation and go back and say the province is to blame for this, and we're saying no, it's the municipalities. Let's get out of the laying of blame situation and get down to cases on solutions. What are the most appropriate solutions that you can find in any of the bills? Capping, tax ratios, phase-ins, there's a whole set of techniques available to municipalities if they would do their homework, and that is where I think they have failed to some extent.

They have not done their homework. What they have done in varying situations, whether it's the city of Orillia, the regional government of Haldimand-Norfolk — the member for Norfolk is introducing a bill to deal with the problem, but the member for Cochrane South gets into this context that we blame somebody else. We're not blaming anybody. What we're trying to deal with is accommodating the complex shift in a new property assessment system, failing which, members opposite, when they were in power, what did they do?

Mr Bisson: We didn't do market value assessment.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Cochrane South.

Mr Hastings: The members of the NDP sat over there on a Saturday afternoon in late November 1993. While members of the NDP caucus were working in good faith to try to implement version 2 of market value assessment, their own Premier was doing another dance jig in the Cabinet Office where they make these secret deals, as is alleged by members opposite trying to portray cabinet government as if it were some sort of conspiracy.

What did they do? They cancelled even the palest version of market value assessment, which means, translated into the suburban municipalities of Metropolitan

Toronto in the old regime, it was adequately satisfactory that they continue the existing tax regime; which is, in the old city of Toronto, a large property portion — ownership properties; residential — were taxed at 1940 assessed values while the rest of Metro, with some exceptions, was being taxed at 1980, 1984 and 1988 rates.

What can one conclude from that kind of an analysis when you look at the performance of the previous government, and even the one before that, which made some attempts to come to grips with this problem? They gave up on the whole thing and said, "It's just fine to leave all those taxpayers in the suburban cities paying more of the freight for the next 50 years," like they had from the first 50 when Gardiner brought in Metro in 1953. "It's just great to leave that the way it is."

When we examine Bill 79 or any of the other previous six bills, we need to understand that there was a massive inequality in the taxing of assessment across properties not only in Metropolitan Toronto, now the city of Toronto, but in many other parts of Ontario. When you undertake such a massive reassessment, you are going to end up making some decisions that are not accommodative of some taxpayers because they are going to end up paying more money. Who wants to do that? Obviously, if you are satisfied with the status quo, then that's what we should keep.

What happened between 1950 to 1997 if you look at school board expenditures or municipal expenditures in Metro? The Metro government went from something about \$1 billion in the mid or early 1980s up to over \$4 billion by the time we put Metro to bed finally and got a new amalgamated city. What did we end up with in terms of bringing in some equity and tax fairness —

Mr Cullen: Why did you download?

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Ottawa West.

Mr Hastings: — under these particular bills, whether it be Bill 79 or Bill 106? We ended up creating an equitable field. It will be proven over time that even if these members, God forbid, should end up running the government of Ontario again, I don't hear one of them saying that we're going to go back to the old system, as we at least have with the official opposition leader on education. He says he'll eliminate Bill 60 so we can go back to the old regime.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Nickel Belt.

Mr Hastings: Basically, what we have across the way is no alternatives, no ideas, no solutions. The only thing we have is to keep everything the way it is because that's great. If you happen to be the recipient of a lower tax base and you've had it that way since 1940, are you going to say, "Jeez, change it for me so we can have equity across all property classes"? Good gracious, no. "We'll just keep it the way it is."

When I go through and look for a comprehensive tax property assessment policy from either party, what do we get? We get basically zero. They're saying: "You shouldn't have done it. You should have kept everything

the way it is." When we go into the next election, I'll be looking to hear members opposite advocate that we should go back to an old system so that people who had been paying the freight, whether it be in the new city of Toronto or the old Metro or other parts of Ontario, can end up having a system with built-in tax inequities, tax unfairness, simply tax status quo because everything is suitable that way.

These bills are designed to help the municipalities get through the problem. Whether they want to seize on some of the techniques, that's apparently up to them to make those decisions. But instead of bemoaning the reality, let's get on with the business case of what we have presented over the last year. Probably we could have done it better, but at least we undertook the task. What did we see from the two governments previous, from the two parties? Nothing. Not a thing.

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That's what I'd like to hear in the future: not nitwitting criticisms of the bill, but some alternative. Do they in fact advocate going back to the old system? At least we'd have a case for it, as we do with the official opposition leader on education. We know where they stand on education reform: They want to turn the clock back, basically. At least we know that. At least we'd know that from the NDP; they'd repeal it as well, probably.

What is their fundamental position on tax policy today dealing with property assessment? I haven't heard one solid idea. I'm really disappointed that we haven't heard specific ideas, not one.

So, Speaker, to conclude, Bill 79 is not as it's portrayed by members opposite. If you read through it, there are sections that are clearly laying out the bylaws, the methodology by which a municipality that missed the boat in the first round can get on with using some of the techniques, whether it be the capping on commercial-industrial or multi-residential property, phase-in, or other options of property classes. They are there if they want to take advantage of them, if the clerk-treasurers and the treasurers of these municipalities went home and did their homework, as well as the councillors, to come up with a solution. Instead of what we've been hearing for the last two days, bemoaning, "Oh, no. The sky is falling. I can't do it," let's get some resourceful imagination —

Mr Blain Morin: You are using your imagination.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nickel Belt.

Mr Hastings: — and get some solutions into what was a classic inequitable, unfair tax injustice situation.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What's quite obvious is that the member wishes to project blame on the local municipalities for something for which the provincial government, and Mike Harris as Premier, are responsible. Here we have a government which has bungled on six occasions and finally has come back with yet a seventh bill to try to rectify what it bungled in the previous six bills. So there is no question that if you want to look strictly at property taxes, this government has continued to drop the ball on it. They are large as life when it comes to

pointing the finger of responsibility at somebody else, but if you try to get them to assume responsibility when a problem is there, these people are in complete hiding.

Locally in the Niagara region, for instance, at the risk of being parochial, and I don't want to be that, they had a downloading exercise. The provincial government said, "You're going to get all of these responsibilities and all of the costs that come with that responsibility, and in return we're going to take some responsibilities." Unfortunately, the difference in costs between the two was \$21 million. Now, they put on some pressure and there were some local initiatives to try to get the government to have at least some transition funds, and they took that down to \$18 million. But now that the property tax has gone up and now that there have been further cuts in local services, municipal services, the Conservative members point the finger at the regional council. I've never been a defender of regional government in Niagara, but I can tell you that they have been dealt all deuces; there are no aces in the deck that has been dealt by Mike Harris to local municipalities. They are the ones who will take the brunt of the criticism when in fact the real problem is right here at Queen's Park, in the Office of the Premier.

Mr Blain Morin: In rebuttal to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, the problem we are facing today is with the changes of this government.

Some of the regional municipalities have played by the rules. Take, for example, the regional municipality of Sudbury and why they are against Bill 79. The regional municipality of Sudbury, in the mid-1980s, was the first region in Ontario to undergo a region-wide reassessment and has been on a four-year reassessment cycle at this time, resulting in an up-to-date assessment base.

What's the problem with changing the system now, and changing the system just for the sake of making change? Well, let's take a look at the Sudbury Star. What does the Sudbury Star have to say about it? "City Forced to Reverse Tax Breaks: About 500 businesses will not receive anticipated reduction in property taxes."

Mr Bradley: Is the Sudbury Star as progressive as ever?

Mr Blain Morin: It's unbelievable how progressive they are.

The treasurer of the city of Sudbury, Larry Laplante, indicates, "We think this announcement," made by the Tories of the day, "destroys the credibility of the new taxation system in the province." Unbelievable.

Interjection: What's the point?

Mr Blain Morin: The point is, we continue, without thinking, to pass bills. Is it seven? Is it eight?

Let me tell you, we talk about by-elections and about the upcoming general election. In the by-election I was just through, the people in Nickel Belt didn't buy the story. They didn't buy the hospital closures. They didn't buy what you were doing to education. They sent a message: "Enough is enough."

Mr Baird: I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. He certainly puts this

issue in perspective with respect to the ongoing taxation regimes going on at regional government.

I was particularly compelled when he explained the Metro level of government here in the new city of Toronto. It was the Metro level of government that went from \$1 billion to \$40 billion in such a short period of time, from the 1980s to 1996-97.

I was very interested to note on this issue of regional government, and I think the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale has put the head on it, that my colleague the member for Norfolk, Mr Barrett, will be debating on Thursday Bill 80, An Act to eliminate the regional level of municipal government in Norfolk and Haldimand, to cut duplication and to save taxpayers' money. Mr Barrett, the hard-working member from Haldimand-Norfolk, will be presenting this bill on Wednesday.

Why is he doing that? Because he is speaking up on behalf of the taxpayers in his community. Mr Barrett has collected more than 10,000 signatures of people who are against the downloading. They don't believe the region should have downloaded the tax burden to the taxpayers. Speaker, 17.9% is absolutely disgraceful.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Nickel Belt, order. Member for Ottawa West.

Mr Baird: The member for Cochrane South can check. That is his exact petition wording. I'm going to tell you that people in Nepean, like our good mayor, Mary Pitt, and the Nepean city council, are going to be watching very closely the debate on Thursday morning to see if there's a trend here. If they can get rid of regional government in Norfolk and Haldimand, perhaps they could do it in other parts of the province. In Ottawa-Carleton, we got a zero per cent tax increase, not a 17.9% tax increase like my colleague in Norfolk county.

Mr Michael Brown: I was very interested in the comments of the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. One of the things that really struck me was, I remember the member who is now the chief government whip railing against market value assessment.

Mr Bradley: Mr Turnbull.

Mr Michael Brown: Yes, Mr Turnbull. He could not accept any form of market value assessment.

Mr Bradley: What about Al Leach?

Mr Michael Brown: And Al Leach; that's right, as our House leader informs me.

You know, the position of your party when in opposition was, "No market value assessment." That's what you said then.

Interjection.

Mr Michael Brown: That's what you said then, and to be unkind to my socialist brethren over here, claiming that they chickened out because of your pressure is a little bit unfair.

But I did want to speak for a moment about what this is doing to the communities I represent. One of those communities, Elliott Lake, is in the unenviable situation of having a rather low commercial-industrial assessment. They have a very excellent residential housing area that

has attracted remarkable numbers of retirees, but the effect of that is that virtually 95% or 96% of the residential property is at relatively the same price, \$40,000 to \$50,000, a great deal. But what it means is that under your system, someone whose value had stayed up because perhaps they lived on a lake, and lakefront property is still at market value, is paying three times what you would pay in downtown Toronto for a similarly assessed property. That is unrealistic. That is crazy.

2000

The Acting Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, you can sum up.

Mr Hastings: In response to the points made, it seems to me that the motive for change was quite evident in the regime we've had and the inequities in that particular property tax assessment regime for the last 50 to 70 years. We're not even hearing from members opposite that they would do away with, say, a current value or modified market value assessment system for one that some proponents in the old city of Toronto wanted, which was what I believe they termed a locational type of property assessment system. From what we can gather from research —

Mr Cullen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Speaker: Could you check for a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Hastings: After that interruption from the member for Ottawa West, we'll get back to the real business, which is, what is the motivation for these bills? It is to bring in a system of tax fairness, tax justice and tax equality. Did we have it before? Not generally, when you look at many of the spiked inequities within the system, just within the Metropolitan Toronto region.

What should have happened is water under the bridge. It wasn't dealt with by the members opposite; it wasn't dealt with by the Davis administration. We're dealing with it. Certainly there are some improvements we could have made, but I do not hear one specific new proposal from members opposite. For example, would the locational system be preferable to the one we have? I don't know. We've never heard from them. They don't have a comprehensive tax assessment policy.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I am delighted to continue to speak on the tax reform issue, which I believe began a few years ago, and we are still dealing with it. I have to repeat some of the things I have said, because we have been dealing with so many bills; I believe this is the seventh or eighth, including all the various amendments that the Minister of Finance has introduced to the original tax reform bill back in 1996-97. You'll recall, Mr Speaker, the point at which Mr David Crombie was supposed to come up with the answer to the tax reform here in Ontario. If you recall, he was not the only one.

I don't know if it's proper at this stage, Mr Speaker, to say congratulations to both of you in the race last night, winner and loser. From what I have heard and read, it was well conducted, and I'd like to congratulate you and Mr Ford as well.

To continue on tax reform, there is perhaps no other argument that taxpayers in general can recognize and attach themselves to, no other thing when it comes to taxes, be it residential taxes, business taxes or any other taxes. When you go out on a daily basis, whatever you purchase, there is tax, tax, tax.

So when David Crombie was retained to deal with the tax reform, we expected to come up with a fair and equitable reform, which we all demanded over the years. It is not that we didn't want it; we didn't want this particular tax reform, not only the original bill, Bill 106, I believe, but all the subsequent bills and amendments. Even today, two and a half years later, the government still cannot get it right. I wonder what Mr Crombie would have to say today, after two and a half years of dilly-dallying with the tax reform bill.

We saw Bill 106, Bill 149, Bill 164, Bill 16, Bill 16 with the amendments, and of course now we have Bill 79, which in the eyes of many is even worse than the first, original bill introduced by the Minister of Finance, because it does not correct mistakes — which, by the way, the minister has recognized. My colleague the previous speaker, the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, did say, "We could have done it better." Yes indeed.

We were not the only ones to tell the members of the committee when we dealt with this bill, all the bills: "Get it right. Slow down and listen to the people and get it right." Well, they didn't, so we have been here dealing with eight bills, eight amendments, if you will, on the original tax bill.

What does it do? What does it really do? What are the consequences of Bill 79 now? We have seen the minister pacifying the business community in the city of Toronto. He wasn't going to budge. He kept on saying: "You people don't understand. We got it right. The bill is right. You got it wrong. What you suggest is going to happen is not going to happen." You'll recall the upheaval and commotion we saw in the city of Toronto here when the bill came to be. The business community said: "We are not going to take this. We will not accept these increases. This is not what we were promised by this government. This is not what we were told by this minister and Premier." So what did they do? They said: "OK. We're going to cap it for you. We're going to impose it upon you."

Did you ever hear of a government telling people in general, especially the small business community, "We are going to impose on you a 2.5% tax increase" or cap or whatever you want to call it, "for 1998, 1999, and the year 2000"? This is totally contrary to what the Premier and the Minister of Finance have been saying in this House, saying to the taxpayers in general and especially to the small business community in Ontario, which, according to them and of course everybody else, is supposed to

be the driving force of the Ontario economy. We agree with that.

The only problem is that the government doesn't recognize that. If they had recognized that, they would have introduced tax reform; they would have listened to the many people who came and made submissions with good recommendations. Those recommendations were not included in any of those subsequent bills or amendments so that indeed the small business community would have benefited.

2010

But what did the government really do? They took care of the big bank towers, they took care of the big corporations and they downloaded on to the small operators. What does it represent now? They have told the small business community in Metropolitan Toronto and all over the place that they are going to have a three-year reprieve. "For the next three years this is OK, you're going to get an increase of 2.5%, and then, beyond that, you're going to be on your own again."

You know what is striking in all of this? When we hear the Premier and the Minister of Finance saying: "You know, we gave you the tools to do it. We gave you the tools not to give an increase to your taxpayers." Hold on a second, Mr Minister. Hold on a second, Mr Premier. You have retained for yourselves the power to do it behind closed doors without consultations, without input from anybody else. You have approved your legislation and you can set your own rates, at your own time, whenever you want without notifying anyone. We have seen what you did with education taxes. You came out and you said: "That's the way it's going to be. Take it or leave it." Well, isn't that nice.

This is indeed the continuation of the other seven bills and even now we are seeing continuation of the same inequities within the same system. So we are saying the government fails to get it and do it right. Even with all the problems that we brought forth to the attention of the government — and they went ahead and approved the various bills — even with all of that, municipalities did say, "We cannot efficiently operate under your guidelines incorporated within your various bills, including Bill 106, which is the first bill." But they went ahead, late as it was in the year. Municipalities were of course to wait because they couldn't get the necessary information. But, late as it was, the final bill went out and, of course, as in most cases, some were expecting increases — very large increases, as a matter of fact — and some were expecting some decreases.

With that, the government said, "We are also going to eliminate the business occupancy tax." They said that because municipalities, they said, requested it. With all due respect to the local municipalities, Mr Premier and Mr Minister, I have to say they did request it but not in the form that you implemented and forced upon the municipalities. What you have done now — and you have tried to correct it. The reason you tried to correct it is because you know now that the Premier was wrong and the minister was wrong, because with the elimination of the

business occupancy tax they created another layer of nightmare, if you will, leaving multiple tenants and landlords in a nightmare.

You try and get a small business owner especially to find out from a landlord: "How much is my business tax? Last year I paid \$1,000. How much am I paying this year?" Now the government has to combine both deals, realty taxes and business taxes, and the poor tenant does not know how much the landlord is passing on to the poor tenant.

Just to give you an example of what's happening in a mall in the city of Vaughan — it's a city now. I better be careful with that, otherwise Mayor Lorna and my friends in council may call me on that. In the city of Vaughan, one of the large malls had horrendous increases in business taxes, to the point that every tenant in that particular mall somewhere up in the Woodbridge area is receiving a \$5 net net per square foot. On top of that, the landlord is charging a 15% administration fee. And you tell me this is fair? I don't think so.

I would ask the Premier and the Minister of Finance to go and speak to those people, because that increase represents for many of those small business people the profit they would have made over the course of a year. Instead of making it fair, they are perpetuating the same inequities as the previous system. On top of that, the thing passed fine within the city of Toronto with respect to the business taxes, what happens now? Now the municipalities beyond our limits, if you will, of Metropolitan Toronto, beyond Steeles and the other boundaries, are getting the true facts from their own municipalities and here comes the beauty. They are screaming murder. Not 10%, 20%, 30%; businesses were receiving increases up to 600%.

That is totally unacceptable and, Minister, you were told, Mr Premier, you were told, that this would happen. What did you do? You even had the guts to say, Mr Minister, "Fix your own problems." Isn't that nice? This is your own doing. You forced these changes on to the local municipalities and now you're telling them: "It's your baby. You're on your own. Fix it." But of course when push comes to shove, we get a reaction. The community out there did exactly what the business community in Toronto did before. They got after the Premier. The press of course had some input in that and, lo and behold, the minister says, "OK, I'm going to solve it for you and we are going to impose a 20% tax."

I really don't know when someone has received a 20% tax increase in their salary or anywhere else, other than the government saying, "We are going to impose on you a 20% increase: 10% in 1998, 5% in 1999 and 5% in the year 2000." Isn't it nice that those people who will be receiving a huge increase beyond those original three years will be receiving the original 30%, 40%, 50% increases? Is this how we are going to bring equity to an antiquated tax system? I don't think so. This is not what those business people, the small business community, expected from their government.

Just the other day we were doing hearings on Bill 70. I believe Bill 70 is the privatization of the 407. That's another wonderful piece of legislation, but that's for another time, for another debate. Making presentations on that we had the clerk, I believe, and the mayor from Halton and the town of Oakville, and what did they say? It is a nightmare because what they have done, based on the imposition of this government, they did rebate those businesses that were entitled to receive a reduction.

2020

Mr Cullen: Mr Speaker, I'm listening with great interest to the member for Yorkview, but I fail to see quorum.

The Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: The member for Yorkview.

Mr Sergio: So I can continue, Mr Speaker, for the next two or three minutes which you have allotted me.

When the government says, "We have done what we have done because we have listened," let me tell you, not only we as members of the opposition in the House but one of the most important, most respected organizations in our province, and I'm talking about the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario — these people are the ones who on a daily basis keep our cities and towns and townships running efficiently. These are the people who direct the local elected people when they have to do their budgets how to cut, where to cut, how to be good administrators. You know what they have to say? I have to read you this because it's very important. Due to lack of time, I won't be reading everything, but this is what they say.

"The Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario has been given to understand that you are placing serious time limitations" — can you believe that, on such an important piece of legislation? — "on committee hearings on Bill 16." This is the old bill. They've never been listened to since. "We have written to you registering our disapproval (refer to letter dated May 22, 1998).

"The association has grave concerns about several aspects of Bill 16. As a result of the lack of opportunity to present our concerns to committee, or otherwise to aid the government in refining an integral piece of municipal legislation, we offer the following comments." They go on to mention a number of concerns which they had with the bill but which this government refused to listen to.

This is how they conclude: "This bill, if passed as drafted, will embroil municipal councils in complex, confusing and inefficient systems of taxation." What they are really saying is that the present system will continue to be inequitable and will not offer any solution for the business, the residential or the other types of properties in our province.

I don't have time but I would love to touch on the education portion of the taxes as well, because it's all part and parcel of this supposed eighth bill, which is called Bill

79. But let me say to the members on the government side that again we are saying to you, take your time and do it right, because this is what the public expects from us.

The Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: The member for Yorkview, I thought, raised a number of really interesting points when it comes to this bill, but I think the most important point he raised is what members in the opposition have been saying right from the beginning of this debate: the government messed up. They went in with their heavy hands, they went in with their big boots and they decided they were going to mess around with the property tax assessment system across Ontario. Why? Because they wanted to impose market value assessment on the city of Toronto and the only way to do that and save face, given their position while in opposition of being opposed to the introduction of market value assessment in Toronto, was to change it to AVA and introduce that for the entire province. As a result, every homeowner, every business person who has property in Ontario, has had a reassessment.

We know that the reassessment was messed up. We know from letters we read into the record earlier that a number of assessments are wrong because the government hurried the process. We also know, as a result of the policies of the Conservative government when it comes to downloading of provincial services on to the municipalities, it means to say that people are going to be, as we know now because the tax bills have gone out, getting huge tax increases, which resulted in the municipality, business owners and people who owned commercial buildings seeing their property taxes go through the roof. This government is bringing in its oops bill to turn around and fix the problem.

But there's a problem yet again, a huge problem. Who are the people in the end who are not protected by this legislation? Individual property owners. They're the people, the middle class all the time, who are going to get it in the ear when it comes to this Conservative government because they're saying it's OK for a person to own the business and own the property that is the business, they get a cap of 10%, but they're not prepared to do that for individuals. What this bill basically does, I think, is favour the business sector over individuals and I don't think that's right.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'd ask the member for Grey-Owen Sound to come to order, please.

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to the speech by my colleague the member for Yorkview on property taxation. I suspect there's a fair bit of disagreement between him and members of his party and this member and members of his party. I wonder if there's the same disagreement in the Liberal caucus on tax increases because I read in NOW magazine earlier this year, when it talks about how the Grits pay for their health and education promises:

"Not surprisingly, the question of how to pay for promises like education equipment was not on the agenda at the

Liberals' retreat in Collingwood. MPP Gerard Kennedy said he and some of his caucus members favour a reconsideration of the positions that they will maintain the fiscal framework, McGuinty's word for keeping the Tory tax cut in place."

We know just as the member for Ottawa West said yesterday — he was right, he was bang on — there is a fight going on within the Liberal caucus. Some people, led by Dalton McGuinty, want to hold the line on taxes and they want to keep the Harris tax cuts. Others in the Liberal Party are wanting the party to take a stand and when those members in the Liberal Party try to take a stand, they're kicked out the door. There's no room for them. They have to go to the NDP, the only party opposing this government to have a clear policy of this government.

The article goes on because, Speaker, I know you're going to be interested in this: "We spent a fair bit of time talking about that in Collingwood," says Kennedy. "That was certainly the centrepiece of a lot of the discussion. It covered a pretty good gamut of the points of view. I don't think we have a consensus yet."

They don't have a consensus yet, so the people of Ontario are being asked to buy a pig in a poke. Will they or will they not get a massive multi-billion dollar tax increase as a result of the unrealistic campaign commitments of the Liberal Party? They don't know. We don't know. We just know that there's a lot of fighting going on in the Liberal caucus and that is really not fair to the people of Ontario. They deserve a realistic choice and a realistic alternative.

Mr Bradley: When I want to know what Guy Giorno is thinking, I just listen to the member for Nepean who tells me what Guy Giorno is thinking, because Guy provides the notes for those in the government who wish to simply ingratiate themselves through himself, the Premier of this province, so I'm glad. I know Guy can't speak himself in this House, but he certainly does have a chance to speak through various members who decide that they will use his script, and I'm always glad to hear that.

The member for Yorkview was excellent in his remarks this evening. He was right on in terms of his assessment of the impact of this particular piece of legislation. He was very good in pointing out, first of all, that the government has botched this on seven different occasions and keeps having to repair it. Now I know in that \$4-million ad that the taxpayers of Ontario are paying for — it's off the air now, but it's the one with the Band-Aid. I know what that Band-Aid's all about because seven different Band-Aids that have been put on this problem. I think if you turned off the sound and perhaps rewrote the commercial, the child in that photograph or on that tape would be placing yet another Band-Aid on the government's efforts in terms of trying some way to fix its mistakes as they relate to the downloading, first of all, but most of all to the property taxes in this province.

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I'm pleased that the member for Yorkview recognizes that this government has attempted to blame municipally

elected representatives for the mistakes that this government is responsible for. He was very astute and most accurate in that observation.

Mr Blain Morin: In talking about Bill 79 or, as my friend the member for Cochrane South indicates, the oops bill, and when we start looking at it and the effect it has had on communities, I'd again like to quote from the Sudbury Star —

Interjection: That progressive paper.

Mr Blain Morin: — that progressive paper — October 29, 1998, where it says:

"Clawbacks: The province's limit on commercial-industrial taxes is ill advised and should be withdrawn.... While such reassessments have a relatively small effect in Sudbury, where properties have been periodically reassessed, the reforms have had a dramatic impact on communities which did not conduct regular reassessments.... The reforms were intended to bring fairness to the property tax system, since cities such as Toronto had not updated assessments for 50 years."

The problem is, this solution does not work all over. The problem is that the people of the north that I represent are going to be affected by this legislation. I bring to mind from the office of the reeve of Chapleau, who indicates — and my friend from Cochrane South has already talked about the effects in Chapleau. When we look at it, it says:

"Given that the province has indicated it wishes to extend the appeal deadline to December 31, 1998, we can expect a lengthy delay in being advised as to the appeals which have been launched. The appeal process compounds the financial uncertainty by virtue of the fact that our 1999 taxation will be based on assessment data" which is incomplete because they're still in the appeal process.

The reeve also predicts a \$16,000 shortfall thus far. Therefore, here we go again. We're going to spend the money on commercials, ripping Band-Aids off people and everything else when we should be reinvesting in communities in Ontario.

The Speaker: Response.

Mr Sergio: I thank you for the opportunity to respond to my colleagues the members for St Catharines, Nickel Belt and Cochrane South, and of course I would be remiss if I didn't respond as well to the member for Nepean.

Let me say to the members of the House, especially to the member for Nepean and the government members, that what the people of Ontario expect faithfully is good delivery, good service and good government from their government, and this is not what they are getting from the Mike Harris government. The member for Nepean wants to twist it around and say, "How are you going to pay for health care and stuff like that?" Let me tell you what we will not be doing.

We will not be spending millions of dollars advertising a pre-election campaign at taxpayers' expense and we are counting, we are up \$48 million. One thing we won't be doing when Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals will be forming the next government, we will not be hiring consultants who ask for \$57 million and the government says, "We will give you \$180 million." This, I promise

you, we will not be doing. We will not be paying consultants to the tune of \$2,650 a day. There is no consultant who is worth that kind of taxpayers' money, and this is what the government is doing.

We expect the government to be more responsible. Evidently, they are not interested, otherwise they would have listened to the people of Ontario, they would have listened to the opposition and made the necessary changes that really would have made a difference and people would have appreciated outside over there and respected the government.

The Speaker: Further debate? The member for Ottawa West.

Mr Cullen: I'm delighted to stand on this now the eighth bill dealing with property tax introduced by the government. I look back to 1995 and I look at the Common Sense Revolution, that bible of policy that the government was elected on, and I search vainly for the words "property tax reform." I don't see them.

What's the first thing the government does? The Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, comes in and wipes out all that municipal support program funding that the province of Ontario gave to municipalities to pay for services to keep property taxes down. That was the purpose of that program, to keep property taxes down. Instead, they got rid of it and said, "You'll just have to make efficiencies." So what did the municipalities do? Some of them raised taxes, some of them laid off people, some of them had to shave off some park maintenance, some people had to shave off road maintenance, but oh, no, those were municipal decisions. Then the government got the bright idea that it should —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Grey-Owen Sound, would you please come to order. The member for Ottawa West has the floor and it's important that we are attentive.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would be remiss if I didn't add that some politicians had to pay for salary increases for themselves.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. Member for Ottawa West.

Mr Cullen: It's interesting the comments I'm getting from the other side, but let's go through the chronology here, because remember, the government was not elected on a platform to reform property tax. It wasn't.

So what did it do? I mentioned that it cut out the funding. But then it said: "Let's see here. We're going to take education off property tax and we're going to download all these other services that income tax and corporate tax are paying for: social housing, social assistance, ambulances, public health. We'll do this." And there was that famous pinky-swear of revenue-neutrality.

Then it discovered that it couldn't take education off property tax, so it brought in legislation so it could look after education but still levy it. Instead of having debates by democratically elected school boards to set the tax levy, it was going to be set by ministerial fiat through cabinet in the backrooms, without debate, by the Ministry of Finance. We have now a province-wide property tax

levy whereby in my community people are actually paying more property taxes for education than before, and for less service.

But that's not the only thing they did. Then they decided that they were going to get rid of the business occupancy tax and they were going to just fold it into the property tax and let the chips fall where they may. Then, as my friends from Cochrane South and Nickel Belt alluded to, there was a Toronto problem, so they decided to bring in current value assessment at the same time as downloading, at the same as the province-wide property tax on education, at the same time they were going to get rid of the business occupancy tax, all these things, and current value assessment. The list went on and on and on.

It's amazing that they didn't take the time to consult with those that know property tax best, which are the municipalities which have been levying it. This is the first time that the province has been levying property tax. You'd think they would talk to the people who are elected on that basis and who know what property tax should be paying for, but they didn't listen to the municipalities. They didn't even listen to the municipal treasurers and clerks; not at all.

So what do we have today? We have today Bill 106, which was introduced on January 16, 1997. The sorry saga began 23 months ago with Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act. Now, if they had thought it through, it would have been a good piece of legislation, it would have gone through public consultation, the government would have heard from people to perfect their bill, because why come in with bad bill? It looks bad for the government to come in with a bad bill, because then you've got to come in and fix it up. There's criticism and taxpayers get mad at you —

Interjections.

The Speaker: If the member for Perth and the member for Peterborough want to have a conversation, there's ample office space in this building. You can go there.

Mr Baird: There's an empty office over in —

The Speaker: Member for Nepean. Continue, member for Ottawa West.

Mr Cullen: Thank you, Mr Speaker. So on January 16, 1997, some 23 months ago, we have the first government bill on property tax, the Fair Municipal Finance Act, Bill 106. That was followed by the Fair Municipal Finance Act (No 2), because they didn't get it right the first time. That was Bill 149. Then there was Bill 160, which we all remember, which centralized education and set this province-wide levy for education, supposedly 50% for residential, still 100% for businesses.

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Look at this: Here's a province-wide levy. They didn't take education off commercial-industrial assessment whatsoever; the province took it all. That was Bill 160. Oh, they didn't get it right. Bill 164 came into play, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, where they set down the rules for the Assessment Review Board. What does Bill 179 do? Oh yes, it corrects some of the rules on the Assessment Review Board. Amazing.

Then they came in with toolkits. Remember the famous toolkits to help manage all these tax increases that were going to come about because of the assessment change and downloading and property tax for education? They introduced a toolkit. But it wasn't in the first session when they did it. It was Bill 15, Tax Cuts for People and Small Business Act, followed right on the heels by Bill 16, Small Business and Charities Protection Act, and that was going to solve the problems of reassessment across Ontario, and it was going to solve the problems from downloading and all the other things.

Did it happen? Did it work? Oh, My Lord, not only couldn't they get it right, but the province of Ontario, this government, was responsible for the tax rolls, and the tax rolls they couldn't get in time. Normally, Mr Speaker, as you and I well know, the tax rolls are delivered by the province to the municipalities in the springtime so they can see what they're dealing with in that tax year in terms of the assessment tax base.

Mr Bisson: When did they get it?

Mr Cullen: Did it come in the springtime, my colleague from Cochrane South asks. When did they get them? It wasn't June.

Mr Bisson: Was it July?

Mr Cullen: It wasn't July.

Mr Bisson: August?

Mr Cullen: It wasn't August.

Mr Bisson: September?

Mr Cullen: It was September, nine months into that tax year. The tax year is on a calendar basis, and the government was so late that they had to come in with a bill, Bill 61, to extend the property tax appeal deadline to at least give property taxpayers the time to file an appeal, which they did.

Excuse me, was that the last time they extended? No, they're here to extend it again. Why didn't they get it right the first time with Bill 61? No, they tabled today the Fairness for Property Taxpayers Act. This is Orwellian Newspeak that just boggles the mind. It is the eighth bill.

I am so surprised. When the minister introduced the bill, which he did on November 5, it said: "There will be amendments to the bill. When this bill is at standing committee, we intend to introduce amendments that will protect multi-residential property owners and tenants under the same formula as commercial-industrial properties." So even when they brought in Bill 79, the eighth bill, they had to introduce amendments yet again because, by God, they hadn't got it right.

Not only that, but they're going to have to introduce other amendments again, because in Ottawa-Carleton we suddenly discover by virtue of this government's property tax reform — now, bear in mind that the government of Canada says it will play along with the rules for all property taxpayers. So when the government — let me see, how many bills back? — under 16, six bills later, the government of Canada said: "OK, you've done this change to assessment, you've introduced 80 tax ratios, eight to 10 property tax classes. We're going to have to pay for business occupancy tax. OK, everyone else has to

play by the rules, we'll play by the rules." Then this government comes in and says, "No, we're going to change the rules and we're going to cap increases." So the government of Canada says "OK, if it's good for the goose, it's good for the gander. You're capping tax increases."

What does that mean for Ottawa-Carleton? If we had stopped at Bill 16, then Ottawa-Carleton would have had its businesses treated the same, the federal government treated the same, no exemptions. Everyone would have been fine and we would have had something in the order — and I have to find it here — of \$116 million or thereabouts.

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): Take your time to get it right.

Mr Cullen: Oh, yes, I intend to get it right. Here it is; I knew I had it. The payments in lieu of property taxes the federal government pays in Ottawa-Carleton — and it recognizes that it has a role to play. It has to pay for the water and the sewer and everything else property tax pays for. Of course, they're contributing towards social assistance and hospitals and ambulances and all the rest of it, but I won't get into that. It would be \$176 million that it pays in property tax, if we had stopped two bills ago. But now, with this bill, all of a sudden it's not \$176 million, all of a sudden it's \$44 million less because they're saying, "If we pay commercial and industrial, any non-residential tax, and the caps are there for businesses, for office buildings, for all those things, then we should be on the same playing field."

I'm not here to defend the federal government. Far be it from me to defend the federal government; not at all. As a matter of fact, as a sidebar, when the federal government brought down its cuts to the health and social service transfer, the HSST, I voted as a regional councillor to say this was wrong. In that I'm consistent with my friends here on this side of the House. Here we are facing a situation where this government's actions are now going to cause a shortfall of some \$44 million to the property taxpayers in Ottawa-Carleton. My Lord, we're talking about, for the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, some \$23 million; to the city of Ottawa some \$14 million; all told for the lower-tier municipalities, 11 municipalities, about \$21 million; for the region about \$23 million.

What is this government doing? This government is now wrestling, going so hard so fast to try and catch up on that mistake and we know it's not the last. Here we are on 11th month of a property tax year. This process began 23 months ago, January 16, 1997. It comes in with the eighth bill, which still has flaws. The minister is going to come in with more amendments, not only to deal with Ottawa-Carleton but to deal with multi-residential as well. It just goes on and on. What do the municipalities, what do property taxpayers say? They say this is craziness.

I have to say as well that it boggles the mind. Not only are we dealing with these assessment changes, these property tax changes, these new ratios, these new property tax classes, but the final bills for the downloading that the property taxpayer has to pay for on this new platform

aren't all in yet. What's going to happen? Here we are in the 11th month of a 12-month tax year. In other words, I'm sorry, guys, 1998 ends December 31, 1998, and these tax bills are still not going to be finished. They're going to walk into 1999, the beginning of the tax process, knowing that they're still going to have to pay for this, because if it's not done in 1998, the legislation said you can carry it over to 1999.

Well, how generous, but here in Ottawa-Carleton we're looking at a cap that goes for three years. I mentioned the \$44-million problem in 1998. What is the problem in 1999? It's \$37 million. What's the problem in the year 2000? It's \$30 million. What's the total, cumulative impact over three years in Ottawa-Carleton because of this government's initiatives? Remember, the government of Canada said, "We'll pay what other property taxpayers are paying." This government said: "We're going to cap what this class of property taxpayers are going to pay, no shift to residential. Commercial-industrial, you're going to stay at 5, 10 and 10." Or is it —

Mr Bisson: It's 10 and 5 and 5.

Mr Cullen: It's 10 and 5 and 5. Let me understand it. Just look at the logic here. The government of Canada is in office buildings. Office buildings are 10, 5 and 5. Why don't they have the same access to the same thing? This is a big mess. That's all it is, a huge mess.

We go back to the Common Sense Revolution. Do we find property tax reform there? No we don't, not at all. Look at the poor property taxpayer now. Here's a government that campaigned in the Common Sense Revolution on all these income tax cuts, and what is happening to the ordinary citizen in the province of Ontario, certainly in Ottawa-Carleton, which I represent? They're finding that, on the one hand, the government gives them the reduction of four bucks or six bucks in a paycheque in terms of an income tax cut, but they're finding, with downloading, with what's happening on education, with what's happening in terms of the property tax reassessment and all this huge mess here, that what the government gives with one hand it takes away with the other. At the end of the day, the property taxpayers are finding they're getting less service at more cost, courtesy of the Mike Harris revolution.

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I will tell you, and it comes as no surprise to members of this House, that we know the number one issue will be health care, because of the government cuts to health care. We know the number two issue is going to be education, because of the government cuts to education. The number three issue is going to be property taxes. This government is so far down the road in terms of property taxes and what it's downloaded on to municipalities.

They didn't even listen to David Crombie when the Who Does What commission said, "It is wrong in theory and devastating in practice" to offload social programs like social housing, social assistance, public health — all those things are income transfer programs — on to property taxes. Why is that? Let's look back to why that is wrong in theory and devastating in practice.

In the 1930s, when all of Canada was going through the Depression, the responsibility for those things lay at the municipal level, and municipalities went bankrupt trying to pay for the programs they were mandated to do.

Just look at what happens in Ottawa-Carleton if we replay the recession that happened from 1991 to 1994. Because of this government's moves, property taxpayers in Ottawa-Carleton will be on the hook for over \$20 million more in property taxes because of the policies put down by the Harris government that they have to contribute so much from property taxes. It is wrong. It has been bollixed. It is a complete mass of confusion and the property taxpayer knows very clearly who has been responsible for this.

I don't have as a member of the New Democratic Party to say this is wrong. I have a whole panoply of politicians, properly elected — Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, Reformers — at the municipal level who can trot out the numbers, trot out the report, as I have here, bring out the tables, show exactly what's happening in each of their municipalities. We heard from the member for Nickel Belt, who did that; we heard from the member for Cochrane South, who did that; we've heard from other members. Listen. What are your municipalities saying? What are the civil servants at the municipal level saying? "You have screwed up big time. This is wrong. Take it back. Rethink it. Go slower. Phase it in." You stand there and say: "It's the municipalities' fault. They didn't use the darn tools we gave them." They didn't use the darn tools you gave them because they were inadequate, incomplete for the tax. You did everything all at once and you're paying the price for it.

Let me see, do I have a loonie here? I'm sure I have a loonie. No, I have a toonie. Who wants to bet me that lousy toonie that this is the last property tax bill in the life of this government? Who wants to do it? There is not a taker. That's because they know full well that there's going to be another one.

It is amazing to me that the Minister of Finance is coming in with his eighth bill. As soon as he announced it — here he is, moving first reading of the bill — he said there are going to be amendments. I should hope so.

Quite frankly, we have not seen the end of it. Just wait till the budget process next year. Municipalities in January, February and March, before they set the actual mill rate, are going to be debating these things. This government's on tenterhooks: "Are the polls going to turn around? Are we going to be able to call an election in the fourth year of our mandate, in April 1999?" Their mandate runs out in June of the year 2000. Please remember that. In the fourth month of the fourth year of their mandate, will the polls turn around and show that they can march forward to another mandate?

I say to you, you hear the sound of hospitals closing, you hear the sound of schools closing, you hear the sound of municipal councils dealing with this mess you've made, and those property tax bills are going to be coming out. You have sown the seeds of your own destruction.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Baird: I took great interest in listening to the remarks by the member for Ottawa West. I certainly acknowledge the member for Ottawa West is someone of great principle, and he's standing by his guns. He disagrees with the policies of the Liberal Party. I wonder how you could disagree with them, because there are no policies of the Liberal Party.

He discussed the number of property tax bills this Legislature has debated and discussed. I guess his view is that we should pass a mega-bill. This government took a reasoned approach. We brought in the new assessment system in one bill. We brought in the assessment corporation, a separate piece of legislation on a separate issue. We dealt with education tax issues in a third bill. I don't think the member opposite would indicate to this House that we should rather have brought in an omnibus tax bill and put all the tax measures of the government into it. We simply wouldn't have agreed to do that, because that would have been the wrong way. This way, we can take the time to debate.

This bill certainly is the result of the consultations we had. We've given municipalities a good number of tools. Regrettably, far too many municipalities decided they didn't want to use tools and some didn't choose enough tools. That's why the provincial government is stepping in to protect small business.

Small business is the economic engine of Ontario. They're a big part: 80% of the 408,000 net new jobs created in the province of Ontario were created by small business. This government and this minister were not quite prepared to step aside and allow the lack of municipal action to hurt small business.

The small businesses in my part of the province, whether they be in Richmond, Stittsville, Greely, Nepean, Barrhaven or Ottawa — it simply would be unconscionable to stand by. That's why this government is stepping in to help small business, to ensure that they can continue to be the economic engine of Canada, the thing that helps bring jobs and prosperity to this province.

Mr Michael Brown: In Algoma-Manitoulin, this is quite an interesting debate. In my constituency, a large number of my constituents still have not received property tax bills. It is so confused. The government has not provided the information needed for unorganized municipalities to be able to send out these bills. Therefore, a large number of people don't have them. A large number of people don't know whether they need to appeal their assessment.

I was talking recently with some people who have a number of properties on Manitoulin Island. They told me they were trying to get a copy of their assessment notice. They had misplaced their assessment notice; they were looking for it but couldn't find it. They thought, "I should be able to call the assessment office and I should be able to get a copy of my assessment." That would seem reasonable. They were even willing to pay a small fee to have that.

You know, in this province, because of the way the software was designed, the assessment office cannot even

give you a copy of your assessment. That is how bad it is out there, what a mess this system is in.

I was in Assignack township. Many of you will know the capital of Assignack: Manitowaning. The clerk in Assignack was talking about the education portion of the tax. He said: "I don't quite understand the map here. Last year we paid half a million dollars' worth of education tax. Therefore, we thought we should pay half of that this time." That's \$250,000, but amazingly, it's \$340,000. When is \$340,000 half of \$500,000?

Mr Blain Morin: When we start looking at Bill 79 and the impact on municipalities, when we look at the rework and the cost of that rework as we go through the process again because of another ill-fated bill — as my friend indicated, we're already looking for amendments to Bill 79.

We talk about the cost of downloading. I'd like to share another quote from Northern Life of October 30, 1998, this time from Mayor Jean Robert. It says:

"If the province doesn't back down, local councils will have to rework budgets settled on months ago and perhaps send out another property tax bill.

"We're short \$280,000," said Valley East mayor Jean Robert. "Where is the fairness? Where is the bottom line that is in Valley East? We will have to hike taxes 9%, adding on to the download. Quite frankly, we're broke."

Where is the fairness? Valley East, a community in northern Ontario — another double-whammy by this government to the people of northern Ontario.

It's not only places like Valley East. We've quoted tonight from Chappleau. I also have before me a proposal from the regional municipality of Sudbury which talks about the outlying municipalities in my constituency, the town of Walden, the town of Rayside-Balfour, the town of Chappleau. They've passed a resolution saying that the provincial government has passed legislation with a broad-brush approach that is not applicable to them. Bill 79 is another error, just like the continuous errors by this government. We're going to need a bigger commercial this time to correct this one.

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Mr Hastings: I tried to follow the logic, if there was any, of the member for Ottawa West. I'd just like to say, now that he has switched parties — I hope he stays where he is — he's going to have to make an addition to his wardrobe and get rid of the blue suit that's more associated with the traditional PC. A checkered one would be more appropriate, since you're now a good, solid socialist.

Speaking about the principles of Bill 79, the members opposite just don't get it. I guess they never will. We asked for alternatives; there aren't any. They just get up and quote some newspaper about how municipalities do not seem, in some instances, to apply any of the techniques that were offered in the bill.

But when we look at the largest area, the city of Toronto, the greater Toronto region, what did it do? It had some problems and it got down to work and used the 2.5%. Why is it so impossible for these municipalities to

use that technique? If that one's not appropriate for their particular property tax assessment circumstances, then why do they not look at some of the other ones? They just hold up their hands and say, "Don't pass the bill."

Then again, if we don't pass the bill they're saying, "We need more money." You guys want it both ways consistently, if you can use the word "consistently." I wish we could hear one solid thought from the member for Ottawa West about an alternative. It would be a blessing, for a change.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Cullen: An invitation like that I cannot help but respond to. I want to acknowledge the contributions of the member for Nepean, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, the member for Nickel Belt, who I thought spoke very well, and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. Let me just walk you down it.

I was a regional councillor in Ottawa-Carleton when we brought in market value assessment. Your current value assessment is the same damned thing. I can tell you that not only did we go through public consultation, not only did we bring in a phase-in program, not only did we subsidize and make sure people did not find themselves out on the street, did not find themselves with ridiculous tax increases, but we were able to do it with one piece of legislation.

Here we are on the eighth piece of legislation. The member for Nepean says: "These income tax cuts we've made will pay for everything. They'll create the jobs." They're not even going to make the Common Sense Revolution target in terms of job creation.

Why don't we go back to the simple property taxpayer, who gets this new bill and is trying to understand: "They changed my assessment. How do I figure out if they've done it right?" So he looks at the property tax bill, tries to figure out the changes — "Oh, no, the base has changed, and now there are new property tax classes and new ratios, and then there are all these other things that come on." He's trying to disentangle this and he's saying: "Who made this mess? Why am I paying more for less?"

That property taxpayer is not going to sift through eight bills to find out the nuances of why the government did this and then changed its mind and did that and something else and extended the deadline twice and all the other things it did. No. The property taxpayer is going to say, "Who made this mess?" There's only one body here that's responsible for making this mess. That is that government over there. It didn't run on this stuff; it's not found in the Common Sense Revolution. It's this government.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I'm awfully pleased to be able to stand tonight and defend Bill 79 and why it was brought in.

Mr Cullen: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the honourable member should have a quorum to hear his comments.

The Speaker: Is a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: The member for quinte.

Mr Rollins: I appreciate that the member across the way can continue to count like that. Moving to a closer row probably brought the numbers a little bit brighter in his mind.

One of the things we have to look at in Bill 79 is that when we started out as a government and as we campaigned through the Common Sense Revolution, we heard on many occasions that our tax assessment, whether it was in houses or commercial and industrial, was not even across the province of Ontario. There were a lot of inequities in it. It was not fair for people in one area to be paying a large amount of tax and yet have the same value of house or business as another area blessed with only paying half as much tax. We needed to bring some continuity and evenness to that.

We brought in Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act, 1997, which started the process. In that bill, we allowed the municipalities to have a reasonably free hand to make some adjustments. In that bill a group of tools was set out that the municipalities could apply to their commercial and industrial and to their residential. The residential didn't seem to be as big a problem, because the assessments in most cases came in reasonably well levelled out. Yes, there were ups and downs, but when the whole thing was settled, most people, as far as their assessment on the housing part of it was concerned, were fairly well satisfied.

Over on the commercial and industrial side, we saw there was a big problem. One of the biggest problems in commercial and industrial was right here in Metro Toronto. They had in there a 2.5% cap to make sure they could phase it in over a period of eight years, to make sure those commercial places were not blessed with such a heavy increase in taxes.

I was called out to a meeting approximately a month ago, or a little more, in my municipality. I had about 80 or 100 people at the hall who were very upset because our municipality, Belleville, saw fit to raise some of those people's taxes by 300%. A 300% rise in taxes is very unacceptable. One part of my municipality had not put in a phase-in period. The city of Belleville did choose to put in a phase-in period of eight years; it was trying to deal with it. But Quinte West didn't choose to do that; they chose to put it in all at once. I had one person come up to me and say: "Doug, my taxes went from \$28,000 a year to \$62,000 a year. I cannot possibly stay in business with that kind of increase."

I know I wasn't the only one coming back to the finance minister here to say, "We've got to do something." We did have a program where the municipalities could use all the tools in that tool kit to phase it in, but at the same time as they phased in that tax increase, they had to put in classifications and they had to make sure those larger commercial and industrial areas were phased into that class and stayed there so they could cap their increase or decrease.

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But no, Belleville took the decision that they weren't going to do that, that they would try to phase it in over a period of eight years, and I give them credit for that. But what happened was, they also gave back a tax credit to large corporations — a \$1.5-million rebate to Sears warehouse, some \$300,000 to a pipeline — and then tried to pass those taxes back on through the municipal taxes that were in the new amalgamated area. In the new amalgamated area their taxes went up 200% and 300%. I had the Christopher family there that had an increase of over 250% in their taxes. I had Frank from Doef's Iron Works with somewhere around a 250% to 300% increase. Those people were just devastated. I think those were the conditions we heard. The finance minister heard it, our members heard it, and we had to bring back in some way of making the municipalities use all the tools in that tool kit.

Interjection.

Mr Rollins: They had that opportunity, but they didn't use them.

Mr Cullen: They didn't have the tools.

Mr Rollins: No. Bill 79 does not put in a whole bunch of new rules. It just makes —

Mr Cullen: The 10 and 5.

Mr Rollins: That 10 and 5 just puts a cap on it, but there was a cap of 2.5% there right from day one if they had wanted to use it. But they didn't use it and they didn't want to phase it in. They had to phase it in, but they also had to do some classification at the same time. If they didn't do the classification, they can't use the phase-in. They had to use all the tools in the tool box. It's not just like eating the sandwiches; you've got to eat the carrots and the other parts that you don't like too. If you don't put it all in together, it won't work.

There was only one way that we as a government could make sure we could guarantee those small, municipal people out in those areas that didn't choose to use the tools that they could make sure their commercial and industrial tax was capped off at 10, 5 and 5.

Mr Cullen: It allows the taxes to go up.

Mr Rollins: Yes, it does allow the taxes to go up by 10%, but it also allows the people, through the reassessment, to go down by 10%. Most municipalities, through the reassessment, did not allow them to increase the dollar value in terms of taxes coming in from that category. They were supposed to stay in the same category, but they did that shift within them, and when you do that shift within them you bring in the unfairness of it.

One of the things that we as a government must continually do is compensate for what happened in the past. In the past, we didn't have an increase in jobs. Under this government, we have 400,000-some-odd net new jobs since we came in. No, we're not at the 725,000 that we promised, but the end of the day is not here yet, and as time goes on, as each month goes by, the cash register rings a little louder and the number gets a little larger.

When you look back over the past, you see that in 1988 the sales tax rate was increased from 7% to 8%. I'm not

sure who was in power in 1988, but I think it might have been the Liberals. That was \$750 million a year, that one little thing.

I know Mr Cullen is defending the NDP now and wasn't there in 1990, but the OHIP premiums were replaced by a new employer health tax, something that was really going to help out. Well, it really helped out, to the tune of about \$2 billion a year. And who did it hurt? Small business again. It whacked them again, another group.

Mr Cullen: How many hospitals did that help out? How many schools did that help out?

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa West, come to order.

Mr Rollins: Something that's awfully close to mind, way back in 1988, going over to those fellows on that side of the House: a fuel tax. That fuel tax in 1988, 1989 and 1991 amounted to another \$1 billion. Who did it hurt again? Another group of small business people.

In 1989 the commercial concentration tax was imposed at a cost of another \$125 million to the businesses of the province of Ontario. That was just another one putting down a little bit more.

In 1993 the retail sales tax was imposed on insurance premiums, raising over \$700 million. A significant share was paid by businesses, there again sticking it to the small business people of Ontario.

This government, the Mike Harris government, is certainly going to try to help out small businesses. We have proven that in the past and our track record shows that.

Several new RST applications were introduced over the 10-year period, including newspapers, advertising inserts, concrete and asphalt mix, sand and soil and gravel. In 1993, the corporate maximum tax was introduced, raising another \$100 million. One of the worst things that happened in all that time: workers' compensation rates went up 30%, and who did that hurt?

Those are taxes on jobs, on people, taxes on the small business communities out there trying to make a living, trying to put people to work, continually trying to pay those kinds of things.

We inherited a huge debt. We looked at close to \$11 billion in the hole each year and we've had to ratchet down quite a lot of the spending, asking everybody, to make sure we can get a balanced budget to make sure we do not pass on to our grandchildren the inheritance of a debt that some other people have caused. Yes, we've going to have been part of the cause of that debt, but we will be responsible enough to make sure that we get that balanced budget and start paying off those debts that we have owed over the years. It isn't going to happen overnight but it is going to happen.

In Bill 16, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act, 1998, there was another attempt to make sure that people at the bottom end of the scale who have to pay taxes are looked after more fairly, that they have the opportunity not to have those taxes put on, and to still be able to continue to do business, create jobs and keep

working. I know that the maximum tax threshold was announced on October 23.

Mr Cullen: Which year?

Mr Rollins: In 1998. It was one of the best days as far as our office was concerned, because we had lots of phone calls: "Thanks for saving us. Thanks for looking after us. I know it's not been easy" —

Mr Cullen: Who created the mess?

Mr Rollins: I know the people who made the mess. One of the biggest parts of the mess was that the municipalities did not see fit —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa West, this is not a discussion, this is a speech. I ask that you allow the member to speak and quit interrupting him. Thank you. Member for Quinte.

Mr Rollins: One of the things was the phase-in over an eight-year period. Most of the municipalities didn't use that, and because they didn't use that opportunity to phase-in over eight years, they put that hardship on to the people. People cannot stand a 200% or 300% increase. I know about the 10%, 5% and 5% increase, but I'm sure that within the next year and a half we can also look to the municipalities to try to encourage them to do away with that 5%, to force them into doing it with less money. We've run this place with less money. We've done a lot of things with less government, with less money, doing more for less, and we'll continue to do that. Also, in the year 2001 we again do a reassessment on the taxes. Once we've got through another of these reassessments on taxes, assessment will be able to look at it and balance it out at a much better level.

We've listened to many, many people, and most people, when the assessment notice came out, were not upset with the assessment because the assessment was reasonably fair. Yes, there are always some that have been up and down, but most of them, when they looked at it and watched their assessment on their house or their property, realized that it was within the realm of reality, that the assessment was close. It was getting their tax bill that really upset the whole apple cart.

When the municipalities failed to use all the tools that were there to make sure they didn't have that increase — and yes, the minister when he announced the bill the other day, said that multi-family residential places will also be capped because those places were allowed to decrease in taxes.

2120

I know that in the Quinte Mall in my town the bigger warehouse had a real tax decrease; the person who had a small operation had a huge increase. It's not fair. They didn't choose to classify, put those pieces of property in the right classification, and cap them where they were as far as their tax was concerned. As long as you allow them to be able to float back and forth and give away some of that tax money to the other people — somebody has to pay it. There's no question about it, no magic in it. That has to happen, particularly in the new amalgamated areas.

When we're in the amalgamation where they bring in rural Ontario into some of the amalgamated areas of larger cities, those rural areas do not have the facilities they have on the Main Streets of Ontario. Those places were built out in the country. Maybe there was a gravel road and maybe it didn't have sidewalks and all that, but they built out there because they knew their taxes were going to be low. Then to have the amalgamation take place and to have the municipalities fail to use all the tools they were given — if they had used those tools, they would not have seen that.

In my municipality I had three or four meetings with my mayor and the CAO of Belleville and also of Quinte west, and they said: "The 2.5% cap won't work. It won't work." If somebody would just wake up. Did it work in Toronto? By gosh, it did work in Toronto. Would something that worked in Toronto maybe work in the rest of Ontario? It will not work if somebody doesn't try. The municipalities just drew a line and said: "We're not going to try with that. Here's an ideal opportunity for us to raise the taxes and point at Mike Harris and Doug Rollins of the Progressive Conservative Party and say, 'You're the guys who raised the taxes.'"

Shame on them, because that didn't happen. We had the fortitude to bring in a 10%, 5% and 5% cap, and that will help solve the problem. Once that reassessment is done again in 2001, it'll start levelling the playing field. Somewhere along the line, these municipalities are going to slowly find out how to do business in a better way and be able to cut back the taxes, and they're not going to need as much of a tax increase as what they have.

When we put that cap on and it stays there, I can't think of any reason why after the year 2001 we're going to have that ended, but at that time the municipalities might just wake up and say: "Hey, we don't need any more money. We've started to do things in a little bit different way."

How many municipalities have taken a look at their operations and downsized? Have they downsized by 25%, 30% and 40%? I don't think so. Some municipalities in our area have cut back a little bit — through attrition and everything they've cut back 2% or 3% — but they haven't taken a real good look at it and tried to do business in a different way than we have in the past. When we get through to 2001, with the time we have, with the reassessments those dollars will start to flow out and level out and it'll be much easier for the municipalities to make that a little bit fairer.

Bill 79 also extends to December 15, 1998, the deadline for landlords to be eligible for gross leases, to notify tenants of the obligation to pay property tax and business

improvement areas. This is another area that yes, they have had meetings on. The municipalities knew what was coming off, how that was going to work, but it did take a little bit of understanding. On some areas, there was no problem at all; they understood what was going on. They had the CAOs in the city halls in the municipalities who made it work right, and when it did it was passed on to them and it hasn't caused any major problems. I've had a lot of people phone up and tell me that there hasn't been a major problem with that.

In my area, particularly in Hastings county, on the industrial we're some 17.6% above the provincial average. We've got to compete with every other industrial place in Ontario. We've got to be able to force that, to push that down so we can be the same as every place else in Ontario, so it doesn't cost more in my municipality to be in the industrial assessment.

When the tax cut is fully implemented, I know there are going to be some huge savings. But it has to happen over a period of time, and I think we as a government can see fit to continue to push to make sure that these things happen. As a government, we've had some 66 tax cuts over the last three years since we've been in. Yes, the personal income tax was probably the biggest thing, but the Ontario tax reduction, the two enhancements of that, Ontario child tax incentive, the landlord transfer tax — all these things do one thing, that is, take the pressure off people who are on fixed incomes. We lowered their tax rate, because every time the tax rate is lowered, it gives people a little more money in their pockets to spend. That's the thing we have continually got to have, to be able to help those people out.

The jobs for tomorrow, Ontario's new technologies tax incentives, the Ontario business research institute tax credit, capital tax reductions for R&D expenditures — all those do one thing: encourage businesses to do a better job in Ontario.

As a government, we can continue to work to make sure that those companies and those businesses and the people all save a little more in taxes and make them go a little bit longer and make it work a little bit better and being fair with it, but we cannot do it if we do not have the co-operation with everybody that's in the whole system.

It's a pleasure to have had the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on Bill 79 tonight.

The Speaker: It being nearly 9:30 of the clock, we can do questions and comments at the start of the next time. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2126.

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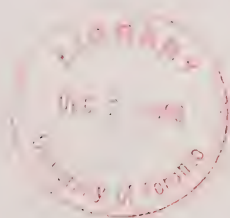
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Wednesday 25 November 1998

Mercredi 25 novembre 1998



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 November 1998

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SAFE COMMUNITIES

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): Last week the member for Timiskaming and myself spent an evening sponsored by the Rainy River Valley Safety Coalition in Fort Frances. In attendance were well over 200 citizens from the Rainy River, Emo, Atikokan and Fort Frances area. These citizens are striving to get their district accredited by the World Health Organization as a safe community and get a "Safe Community" designation by the year 2000.

We were also joined by the president of the World Health Organization, Dr Leif Svanstrom. He certainly brought a great message to the group. He was on stage with the president of the coalition, Doug Anderson. Doug indicated to the group that when you look at the safety movement, it's one of the biggest movements in the world today. This was certainly reinforced by Dr Svanstrom.

It was a very informative evening. We had a student choir performing a safety song. We also had a senior group from Fort Frances that did a very unique play. It's called Pills and Spills. It delivered a message to the entire audience about the abuse of prescription drugs.

Again I would like to wish the Rainy River Valley Safety Coalition all the very best as they strive for their accreditation as a designated community. A very great evening and a very sincere message.

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Make no mistake about it: It's Mike Harris and the Ontario Conservatives and this Conservative government who plan to shut down Hotel Dieu in St Catharines. It's Mike Harris and the Ontario Conservative government who plan to terminate those highly successful programs in oncology and dialysis and palliative care which Hotel Dieu has pioneered and developed to a sophisticated level and for which it serves all of Niagara region.

You can hide behind the restructuring commission, but at the end of the day the decision is this government's. The restructuring commission is only serving this government by administering and delivering this government's policies to hospitals across this province, and in the case of Niagara region to Hotel Dieu.

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 novembre 1998

Jim Bradley, the member for St Catharines, and I have been firmly and consistently and persistently standing together in condemnation of this government and its hospital closure policies and in support of Hotel Dieu's survival. I call upon the four Tory backbenchers from Niagara region to do the same. The fact is that Jim Bradley and I have from day one defended not only Hotel Dieu's right to survive, but the need for it to survive to protect the health care interests of this generation of Niagara region residents and future generations.

I challenge other Niagara MPPs, those four Tory backbenchers, to stand up and condemn those policies of this government that are going to shut down Hotel Dieu, condemn it to death and condemn the residents of Niagara region to consequences in terms of inadequate health care.

RIDING OF QUINTE

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): It is my pleasure to inform the members of the Legislature that the Quinte area was recently rated as the best place in Ontario to live by the Ontario Social Development Council.

The council created an index consisting of 12 indicators. Each is assigned a value of 8.33, for a total of 100. This represents the base year of 1990.

Everyone in the Legislature should be happy to know that the report reveals that the quality of life in Ontario is improving after the havoc wreaked by the previous government during the first five years of this decade, but what is particularly pleasing to me, as the member for Quinte, is that the quality of life as measured by the council is higher today than at any other time in this decade. The index for Quinte was 115.

Quinte has recovered from the devastating recession of the early 1990s faster than Toronto and certainly much faster than neighbouring Kingston and The Islands. When I look at some of the indicators used by the council to measure the quality of life, I can see the positive impact this government has made on Quinte, from job creation to an investment of \$12.26 million in long-term care.

I have every confidence that Quinte will continue to have the high quality of life that makes it the best place in Ontario to live.

NURSES' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The record of the Harris government concerning the protection and appreciation of nurses over the course of the last three years has

been abysmal. Hospital closings and reductions to hospital budgets have led to unprecedented job losses in the nursing profession, with up to 10,000 nursing positions lost in the hospitals of Ontario, while this government continues to waste \$50 million in advertising.

The Harris government, by its actions, has clearly shown that it doesn't value the enormous contributions nurses make to the health care system. If they did, we in Ontario wouldn't have the dubious distinction of having the lowest number of nurses per capita in the entire country.

We must show our nurses that we care and that we appreciate the very demanding and valuable contributions they make. We must enshrine their rights in provincial legislation and that's why, later today, I will be introducing an act entitled the Nurses' Bill of Rights.

My fellow Liberals and I want to ensure that every nurse has the right to be given the opportunity and the means to provide high-quality nursing care. We want every nurse to have the right to be heard and consulted by other hospital staff on health care issues relating to their patients. We want every nurse to have the right to participate in health care reform. We want every nurse to have the right to carry out his or her duties without fear of reprisals and in a setting free of harassment and that promotes professionalism and teamwork.

The question is, does Mike Harris have the courage to call this act?

1340

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Mike Harris and Dave Johnson might think they've pulled the wool over the eyes of the parents in this province by the tinkering they've done with the education funding formula, but I've got to tell you, it's not working.

Parents are continuing to meet on a nightly basis in my riding, and I've talked to my colleagues and the same is true in their ridings. Last night I was with a group of parents; tonight Kew Beach school is meeting on the issue of school closures.

You see, you didn't really fix the funding formula. Your own panel of experts said that you should have in place an appeal process to deal with characteristics of buildings. What did Dave Johnson do? He just moved from 100 square feet per pupil to 106 square feet and said, "OK, that'll take care of it." But the calculations are still based on the ministry determination of school capacity and school space. So the ministry has decided that if you have a parent resource centre or if you have a dedicated music room or a dedicated French-language room that should be used for a classroom instead, you have to do that. That's empty space and that's space that you'll be penalized for and you won't be funded for.

Do you know what? If they included a boiler room like they did in some of the schools in Toronto, a basement boiler room, then you'll be penalized if you don't use that. You see, tinkering with something that's fundamentally

wrong won't work. Putting off a problem until after an election only builds cynicism in the public, and it's a well-deserved cynicism and a cynicism that will be paid back to you in spades.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to six individuals in Oxford riding who were recently honoured by a local church community.

Each of these six women has volunteered her services to the South Zorra Baptist Church for more than 50 years. Collectively, they have given more than 300 years of service to help make their faith and their church community stronger and more viable. Certainly these volunteers have shown their leadership through example as they have been involved in many groups, organizations and events in their church. They have also made a positive impact on the lives of their fellow congregation members, young and old alike.

Today, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Vera Hook, Sunday school teacher, volunteer driver, president of the ladies' aid and prayer warrior; Pauline Mattson, choir member, prayer warrior, president of the ladies' aid; Eugenie Watson, Joy Club, prayer warrior, Sunday school teacher; Audrey Carter, church treasurer, Sunday school choir leader, organist and pianist; Hazel Taylor, mission field worker, Joy Club founder, junior church teacher and prayer warrior; and Kae Goodall, Joy Club storyteller, Sunday school teacher and prayer warrior. Vera, Pauline, Eugenie, Audrey, Hazel and Kae have made a valuable contribution to Oxford county and to society through their volunteer efforts.

Volunteers are an important part of many local groups and organizations. Without their efforts, many of these organizations would be unable to function effectively. Certainly they are to be commended —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This morning, the Premier decided to take a whole bunch of loonies and show the people of Ontario where their supposed tax cut is coming from.

This statement is about the school funding formula. As much as the Premier would like to come out with some kind of late fix-it program, the reality is that his supposed tax cut is causing new user fees right across the board, and the latest is last night's decision by the Peel board to charge a \$50 user fee for lunch supervision for kids, most of whom are taking buses to school and can't get home even if they wanted to.

The truth is that this school funding formula is in the same bunch of money as principals, secretaries and vice-principals. What choices do these school boards have when they need to find the funding to hire people to supervise hundreds of children over the lunch hour?

The truth is, this funding formula simply doesn't work, and this is but one example of the new user fees that are now in the field and that parents are having to deal with. We heard from one parent who has three children in one school within the Peel school board. That's \$150 more that she'll be paying in a user fee so that her children can remain in the school.

All we can say to that is, when he decides to take loonies, we want to say: "This is about user fees. This is not about a tax cut."

CHILDREN'S CAR SEATS

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I wanted to inform the House of a course that's being run today and tomorrow at the CAW child care centre with respect to the safe installation of child car seats.

As a parent of a five-year-old son, Brett, I did what most parents do. I borrowed a car seat from a friend, put it in the back seat of my car, made sure that the seat belt was strapped on correctly, and away I went.

I received a letter this summer from Brenda Godier in Windsor, who told me a little bit about the dangers children are exposed to if the car seats they are riding in are improperly installed. She told me there wasn't any place in the Windsor area where she could bring her vehicle to get an opinion as to whether it was safely installed.

As a result of the research that I did, I found that 25% of infant car seats are improperly installed, and most of them don't have tether straps, which is an important safety feature. Motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of children between the ages of one and four.

I think it is incumbent on us to ensure that child seats are safely installed. I want to thank Earl Dugal from the CAW child care centre, Heather Boyer, and Elsie Gailbraith and Marianne Hamelin, who are with the Head Injury Coalition, who joined with me in announcing this program in Windsor, and call upon this government to ensure —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

FRED GIES

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): It is with pride that I stand today to recognize and pay tribute to Mr Fred Gies, a World War I veteran who lives in my riding. Fred is one of 620,000 Canadian soldiers who fought to defend freedom in the First World War, in which 173,000 Canadians were wounded and 66,000 gave up their lives.

The heroism of the men and women who fought in the world war should be a beacon of light to each and every MPP in this House who believes, as I do, that this place is one of the truly great centres of freedom and democracy in a country which today is recognized as having attained the highest quality of life for its citizens of any country on earth.

The men and women who fought in the world wars fought to ensure their legacy, a legacy of democracy, of

freedom of speech, of freedom of religion, of a free and independent press and of compassion. This is a legacy which our modern military forces are working diligently to maintain and this is a legacy which every member of this House strives to exemplify.

Fred Gies is a very active 102-year-old veteran who flew to France for his first-ever flight. On November 11, the 80th anniversary of the Armistice, Fred, who served in the killing fields of France, received that country's highest distinction, the Legion of Honour.

I want to thank Fred Gies and his compatriots for their contribution and sacrifices and to congratulate him for the honour they bestowed on him in France.

It is important that we make a conscious and concerted effort to ensure that the history of this country's contribution to freedom and democracy throughout the world is enshrined in our educational system. Let it be part of our legacy. Thank you, Mr Fred Gies.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on administration of justice and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 68, An Act to incorporate Legal Aid Ontario and to create the framework for the provision of legal aid services in Ontario, to amend the Legal Aid Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 68, Loi constituant en personne morale Aide juridique Ontario, établissant le cadre de la prestation des services d'aide juridique en Ontario, modifiant la Loi sur l'aide juridique et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Monday, October 26, 1998, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg leave to inform the House that today the Clerk received the 12th report of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 105(g)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NURSES' BILL OF RIGHTS, 1998

DÉCLARATION DES DROITS DES INFIRMIÈRES ET INFIRMIERS DE 1998

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to protect the rights of nurses providing services in Ontario / Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à protéger les droits des infirmières et infirmiers qui offrent des services en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The purpose of this bill is to establish a bill of rights for nurses providing nursing services in hospitals in Ontario, and to remind the government that priorities are extremely important in health care.

The Speaker: I've got a ruling on a point of order from the member for Fort William. I'll read it when she arrives if that's OK.

1350

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to seek unanimous consent for a motion in which this House would add its voice to the international outcry against the imminent execution in Texas of a Canadian citizen, Stanley Faulder. This is a case that has striking parallels to such cases as Guy Paul Morin, Donald Marshall and David Milgaard, who were convicted of murders only to have it proved later that they were innocent. Those innocent men are now free.

But in Texas, or anywhere else which maintains the brutal practice of capital punishment, some judicial mistakes will inevitably be fatal. Thankfully, Canada has abolished the death penalty so there was a possibility to correct the errors that occurred in our courts. In Texas, however, where Stanley Faulder sits on death row, his execution is scheduled for December 10 despite growing concern that he may also be among those wrongly convicted.

Amnesty International has assembled a dossier challenging the fairness of Stanley Faulder's conviction. He was denied a chance to contact the Canadian consulate for advice. No physical evidence has ever linked him to the crime. The Criminal Lawyers Association and the Association in Defence of the Wrongly Convicted spoke out today here at Queen's Park. James Lockyer, whose courageous defence freed Guy Paul Morin, explained the situation at a news conference today and urged all of us to take immediate action. It will soon be too late.

I'm asking the House for unanimous consent to place a motion that would support Amnesty International in its appeal to stop the scheduled execution. It would call on the governor of Texas, George Bush, to conduct a full and fair clemency hearing in the case of Stanley Faulder. I ask for that unanimous consent, Speaker.

The Speaker: Can I get a copy of that unanimous consent, please? Thank you.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We really would have liked to have some advance notice of this so that we could consider what in fact is being asked for. I'm therefore somewhat pressed to take action on this without really knowing all of the facts.

The Speaker: Same point? Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: The reality here is, the press conference was held today to bring international attention to this. This person will be put to death on December 10 if we do not act on it. If the government House leader is asking for some time for people to read the motion such that it might be dealt with later on today, I'd be willing to entertain that. I have extra copies of the motion if anyone would like copies, or you may read a copy of the motion now. The point is that December 10 is the date scheduled for execution. There is rising evidence that this may be a wrongful conviction case, and we should take action on it now.

The Speaker: I certainly don't want to insert myself into the discussions about this issue. I understand the gravity of the situation. But I'll tell you, at the moment we are seized with this because you're seeking unanimous consent. We must dispose of it at this time, one way or the other. I have no alternative but simply to move unanimous consent.

Mr Hampton: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If that's the will, we will stand this down until the end of question period, and we'll ask for unanimous consent then. I'll withdraw now and ask for unanimous consent at the end of question period.

The Speaker: That's fine. Any time you want to withdraw, you can withdraw.

ORAL QUESTIONS

APPRENTICESHIP LEGISLATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Education. I want to speak to you about your apprenticeship act, which today I understand you have tabled amendments to which will exempt the construction sector. What we're talking about here, just so we know, means this act is no longer going to apply to the stonemasons, the boilermakers, the millwrights, the electricians, the carpenters, the ironworkers, the lathers, the limeworkers, the painters, the plasterers, the plumbers, the sheet metalworkers, the steamfitters, and many, many others.

What you have effectively done today is gutted your own bill. What I'm asking you to do out of kindness to your own bill is to admit that you've gutted it. It's now on the ground, it's bleeding. Do the right thing: Put it out of its misery and kill it.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): That's a very fanciful interpretation of what happened today. The construction industry made a good case. The committee listened to the construction industry across Ontario, in Toronto, in Windsor, in Sudbury and Ottawa, and felt that a good case was made. The committee has conveyed those views back to me, I might say, and the government has responded. I could say that the remainder of the bill that doesn't deal with the construction trades deals with a good many trades in Ontario. Regulated and unregulated trades in Ontario amount to about 200 across the province.

I quote the Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters Canada, representing many tens of thousands of employees across Ontario: "Removing the rigidities of the old apprenticeship system and replacing them with a flexible, relevant and customer-focused training initiative is a positive step to help create an environment in Ontario that meets the needs of the next millennium." That's exactly what we're doing through the apprenticeship act.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you can't save this bill. It is now beyond redemption. You have no choice but to kill it. You've dealt with the construction sector. Let's look at what the largest employer in the province has said about this. Let's look at the auto sector. The CAW said that Bill 55 will cost Ontario jobs, that you should withdraw the bill. Yesterday you got a letter signed by the people representing the personnel departments at General Motors, Chrysler Canada and Ford Motor Co. They said, "We urge you to delay passage of Bill 55 until such time as constructive, meaningful consultation can take place with all significant stakeholders." It's not just an issue of the construction sector. Now it's the auto sector. They're saying, at a minimum, delay it and allow for a meaningful consultation. Will you do that?

Hon David Johnson: I have a submission from the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association supporting Bill 55. I have a letter from the training sector in GM supporting Bill 55. I have a letter from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, representing 40,000 small and medium-sized enterprises across Canada, supporting Bill 55. I know it's difficult for the opposition to contemplate change. This apprenticeship act has been in place for over 30 years, through the jurisdiction of the NDP, through the jurisdiction of the Liberals. The world has changed. We need more apprentices. We need a more flexible approach to the apprenticeship system.

Mr McGuinty: There is general acknowledgement worldwide that we've got one of the best apprenticeship systems in the world. Suddenly you arrive on the scene, johnny-come-lately, and you say you're going to dabble and you're going to make — it's more than dabbling — tremendous changes in the area.

I want to go back to the letter sent to you by the vice-president and general director of personnel of General Motors, the vice-president of employee relations, Ford Motor Co of Canada, and the vice-president of human resources, Chrysler Canada Ltd, DaimlerChrysler. They're saying the bill can't make it. They're saying it's

going to do more damage than good. They're saying it's not in keeping with the times. They're saying we need to do more to make sure that we've got the best-skilled and the most highly educated workers. They're saying this bill doesn't do any of that.

I'm asking on their behalf and on behalf of all those who may be entertaining going into an apprenticeship program at some time in the future in this province to kill this bill.

Hon David Johnson: That's clearly the approach of the Liberals — I hope that's not the approach of the NDP — to do nothing, to sit on the status quo. That's not the approach this government has taken.

The Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association has indicated a tremendous shortage of skilled labour over the next five years. They have been pleading with this government to proceed with this bill, to proceed with changes to the apprenticeship system, to encourage more apprentices to come into the system. That's exactly what this bill does.

We have the support of the automotive parts manufacturers, we have the support of the Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters Canada, of the CFIB. The world wants to get on with the apprenticeship reform. Maybe the Liberals don't, but the world does. It's time to bring us up as we approach the new millennium and prepare our skilled workers for the future that's going to be there in the next century.

1400

RIVERDALE HOSPITAL

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. Today in the Legislature there are representatives and patients from Riverdale Hospital. You have ordered the closure of that hospital. You know that is a chronic care hospital. There are 435 vulnerable Ontarians who find themselves as patients in that hospital and who make their home there. They are very anxious and they are very worried. They want to know where they're going. They want to know where their new home is going to be and they want your assurance that they'll receive the same quality intensive care in their new home as they're receiving at present in the Riverdale Hospital.

They arranged to have a meeting with you. You cancelled that meeting. They came here today to try to meet with the Premier. They were unable to do so. Would you please stand now, Minister, and tell us where those 435 vulnerable Ontarians are going to go after you've finished closing the hospital, which your Premier promised he would never do.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I think it's very important to put this in the proper perspective. First and foremost, our concern is for quality health services and to make sure that patient care continues to be delivered to these individuals.

As you may know, staff from my office and staff from Minister Jackson's office have spoken with Riverdale officials on many occasions. In fact, the staff from

Minister Jackson's office advised the Riverdale officials on several occasions that until hospital officials have been formally debriefed on the long-term-care tender matter, a meeting with the minister — any minister — was inappropriate. This position is based on a very clear legal opinion that we obtained from the Ministry of Health lawyers.

Despite your antics today, there was communication with the hospital on November 20 indicating that a meeting would take place with Mr Jackson and myself on December 4.

Mr McGuinty: That is completely unacceptable. You are the minister responsible for the health and well-being of every single Ontarian. There are some here whose hospital you have ordered closed. They want to know where they're going to go.

I don't understand what chronic care patients have to do with the minister responsible for long-term care. The very fear that these patients have and that their families have is that these patients are going to be transferred into a long-term-care facility. Do you know what that means? Chronic care beds cost us \$240 a day, long-term-care beds cost \$60 a day.

There are 3,500 patients Ontario-wide that you have determined will be transferred from chronic care hospitals, public hospitals, into the long-term-care sector. You know what means? That saves you over \$200 million. This isn't about better health care; it's about discount health care.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr McGuinty: Stand up and provide every assurance to these patients and their counterparts in hospital today that these patients will not be transferred into a long-term-care facility and tell them where exactly —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Obviously you had your second question crafted and you didn't bother to listen to the first response.

First of all, let me say —

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Witmer: If you had listened to the first response, you would have heard me say that on Friday, November 20, there was a communication with the officials from Riverdale indicating that a meeting would take place with Mr Jackson and myself on December 4, after the debriefing regarding the long-term-care tender had taken place, as was advised by the Ministry of Health lawyers.

However, in response to our concern that the patients continue to receive high-quality care, I'd also like to share with you a letter that was written to Mr James Wilson, the board chair at Riverdale, on October 22, where we indicated to him that we would establish a joint process with the hospital where Riverdale would be a full participant and implementation of a plan would obviously dictate the final closing date, and we would undertake to accommodate all patients based on their need and there would be no closing of any hospital —

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — until such time as each and every patient had been determined —

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: There are 435 chronic care patients presently resident at Riverdale Hospital. You have ordered the closure of that hospital, notwithstanding your Premier's promise to the contrary that he wasn't going to close any hospitals. Please stand up right now and tell us that these 435 patients will be transferred, at minimum, to another public chronic care hospital, that they will remain your responsibility under the Canada Health Act, not the other guy's responsibility under long-term care. Provide us with that assurance, that these 435 patients will be transferred into chronic care beds and there will be no reduction in the quality of care they are receiving at present.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have always given our assurance that the needs of these patients at this hospital and elsewhere are first and foremost. In fact, in this letter we indicate that we will accommodate each and every patient based on their need and they will get the highest quality of care, because that's the only quality of care that we are going to be providing for anybody in this province: the best care.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I want to ask you about Jan Donovan. You should remember Ms Donovan, because you met with her on August 21 of this year. Ms Donovan was having trouble getting payments from her ex-husband to support their daughter. She went to the Family Responsibility Office. She told you about the months and months of frustration, of phone calls never returned, lost files, computer breakdowns, and on and on.

She went to you because you talk about cutting red tape, about rooting out bureaucratic inefficiency, about getting children their fair entitlement. You told her you would ensure that her case would go straight to Charlie, meaning Charlie Harnick. You said Charlie would help. Minister, it's three months later, November 25. So much for action. You haven't called her back. You avoided her calls. Charlie sure hasn't gotten in touch. Talk about inefficiency. Tell me why the children of this province aren't getting your help.

1410

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I'd be very pleased to look into the circumstances of this case. There have been many women who have come to my office who have received very good support and care from the Family Responsibility Office, where we've contacted the ministry, we've contacted the department and we have had very good success at resolving those issues. I'd be very pleased to look into what has happened to this case and why it has not yet been resolved.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): This is outrageous. You already made a commitment to look into it. It has been two years now since your Attorney General has bungled the family responsibility and family support plan office, and you just shrug this off. You make excuses. Your government's incompetence has resulted in an office that isn't operational.

Jan Donovan is a very careful woman when it comes to working with you and your government. She has documented every call, every interaction with your office and the Family Responsibility Office. I have a gift for you from Jan Donovan: her notes, her correspondence, all wrapped up in your red tape. I'm sending this over to you now, because it tells a sordid tale. Ten months later, her case still isn't properly registered. You've lost her file twice. She has had to provide the FRO with her application, court orders and letters over eight times — countless telephone calls, hours on hold, being bumped from one office to another.

Your government has cut staffing, has shut down the regional offices of the FRO. Why don't you come clean? You're not cutting red tape; you are adding to it by your incompetence and your indifference to the women of this province.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Speaker, I refer this question to the minister responsible for family support, Mr Harnick.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): We at the Family Responsibility Office increased our ability to provide enforcement. In fact, the number of dollars that we are collecting has considerably increased: a 36% increase over October 1994, almost \$40 million collected last month. We are endeavouring, as always, to deal with all the phone calls that come in. Last month we assisted over 2,100 people phoning the Family Responsibility Office on a daily basis. The average wait time has been reduced to just over eight minutes. Through the new enforcement techniques, we are collecting more money for women and children than we've ever been able to collect in that office before. Nonetheless, if the details are provided, I can find out what the issues are in dealing with this particular matter.

Mr Kormos: Ms Donovan, that, by the way, was the "Charlie" that the Minister of Community and Social Services was speaking of.

This isn't just one case; it's a horrible, desperate situation, but there are thousands of cases like Ms Donovan's. There are over 80,000 cases in the FRO where mothers aren't getting their support payments. The FRO knows where Ms Donovan's ex-husband lives and works. They haven't even investigated. What good is it to provide all this information when there's no enforcement? Why would the employer respond if there's no threat here?

I want you to know that in the last year alone the NDP has handled well over 1,000 calls from desperate mothers about the mess at your Family Responsibility Office. My office gets over 500 cases a year; the member for Sudbury gets another 800. We can't keep up, and clearly these people don't even bother going to their Tory MPPs for help. A lot of good that would do. Ms Ecker has demon-

strated that. You've done a grave disservice, a serious attack on women and children in this province. When are you going to straighten this mess up? It's over two years, Attorney General. Straighten the mess up or resign so somebody else can do it.

Hon Mr Harnick: A larger percentage of cases within the Family Responsibility Office today have money flowing in them than ever before, including when the honourable member's party was in government. We have over 73,000 people who have been reported to credit bureaus. We have people who have their driver's licences being suspended on a regular basis. In the first week of October we had 177 matters in court for collection. Eighty-four of these were default hearings; 24 were first appearances. We are in the course of sending out 23,000 of the hardest-to-collect files to collection agencies — files that when the NDP was the government they had given up on and left in cabinet drawers.

We are doing more today to collect money that has been uncollectable for more than a decade than the NDP ever did when they were the government. We have more money flowing today to women and children in this province than has ever flowed from the Family Responsibility Office. We are doing far better than they ever did.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Education. On Monday I raised with you the case of Harry Bellemare, a disabled 11-year-old grade 6 student who for the first time in his school career no longer has a full-time educational assistant. He is not eligible for that special help under your new funding formula. In your answer you said, "The parents, last week actually, well before the article appeared in the newspaper, did sit down with the local school board...and sorted out that situation...to the satisfaction of all concerned." Well, Leslie Bellemare, Harry's mother, called my office and said simply, "The minister lied."

Minister, not only has the problem not been solved, but the day after I raised the case with you, Harry fell and hurt his hand when he had to go to the washroom by himself. Harry is not alone. The Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped is getting call after call on this issue. Your new funding formula is putting special-needs students, their safety and their education at risk. When are you going to do something about it?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Let me say at the outset that I'm sorry to hear that this particular individual has suffered a fall and an injury. I was informed by staff that there were meetings last week that dealt with this matter and straightened it out. I'm sorry to hear that apparently is not the case, and you can rest assured I will be having the ministry investigate this matter further.

Beyond that, I would say that the monies through the special education grant — the basic facts are unchanged: over \$1.2 billion has been allocated. This government, I think for the first time in Ontario, is taking special edu-

cation very seriously, to the extent that we have allocated a specific amount of money to each and every school board, and this money must be directed towards the individuals who need the assistance, and they need assistance at various levels. We have earmarked that money and we are insisting that it be spent, in terms of assistance, to the very kinds of individuals you're describing.

Mr Hampton: Minister, your answer couldn't be further from the true facts. Harry's case is not alone. I've got the form letter that you send out to parents, telling them you're earmarking the money, but when you read it carefully it says that you have not protected special education funding, that some of the money has been put under different funding envelopes, like transportation and administration grants, which means it's not protected at all.

Here's the real story: The budget line for teaching assistants was cut by \$1.2 million in Kingston-Frontenac; by \$200,000 in Algoma; by almost half a million dollars in Wellington Catholic schools; by more than half a million dollars in Niagara Falls schools; by \$600,000 in Ottawa-Carleton; by more than \$1 million in Peel; by more than \$100,000 in Superior-Greenstone; by more than \$1 million in Halton public schools; and just less than \$1 million in Halton Catholic schools.

That's your funding formula. You admitted it was wrong and tried to fix it where school operating costs were concerned. Will you now do the right thing and fix it with respect to special education?

Hon David Johnson: I stand by the statement that this provincial government has earmarked the money for special education. Some of the money — for example, those involved in special education need transportation as well as teaching. So, sure, some of the money is allocated to transportation for those who need special education. There's no question about that. I don't deny that. It's an obvious fact.

We've gone to the extent of setting up a special audit for special education, over the summer months, of former superintendents, existing superintendents, people with expertise, people who have worked with special education for many years. They have reviewed on a board-by-board basis each and every board in Ontario and asked for submissions on special education. They have made a recommendation to the ministry on what should be funded to each board. We have said yes to those particular recommendations on a board-by-board basis and those monies are in the process of being flowed to the boards, some \$127 million in total above and beyond what was originally allocated to the boards specifically for special education.

1420

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary, the member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Last month I asked the minister about support for children with communication disorders. The minister said, "There is more money for special assistance such as speech pathologists in the funding formula." I think the minister should throw away his

spin lines and read his mail, because the Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorder wrote to the minister recently to show that there are still problems.

He wants to talk about a board-by-board basis. The Upper Canada District School Board has only two speech-language pathologists to cover five counties. In the Near North board a child who has cerebral palsy no longer gets speech and language services because he does not qualify for individual funding under the funding formula. Parents are reporting similar problems in York region. In the Upper Grand board, after amalgamation the number of schools each speech-language pathologist services has been increased with no new staff hired.

Minister, these parents and their children want to believe that you're listening to them. They know you are reviewing the funding formula. Prove you care and fast-track your review and give the kids the chance they need. Will you improve the funding for special education in the province so these boards will have enough money to give the proper services that students need?

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite alludes to the fact that we are reviewing special education, and there is an expert panel looking into special education. We've gone to enormous steps to ensure that the special education funding is appropriate. There was an initial envelope of well over \$1 billion assigned. There was, during the summer months, the audit I referred to — I directed my comments to the leader of the third party — which has gone on a board-by-board basis. In addition to that, yes, there is an expert panel which is looking at the circumstances around special education. I look forward to the comments from that panel. I can only assure you that this government has been willing to allocate the resources to special education in the past in response, for example, to the audit this summer, the resources that are required to support the children in their need across the province.

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon David Johnson: There is more money across the province for speech pathologists, but if the review that comes forward from the expert panel suggests that more support is needed in some particular circumstance, then I —

The Speaker: New question, leader of the official opposition.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. Recent studies show that our province has fallen behind others when it comes to treatment of cancer. I want to provide you with the opportunity now to provide Ontarians with some reassurance on a specific front. The recommended maximum wait time for radiation treatment for people with cancer from referral to treatment is four weeks. Can the minister tell the House what percentage of cancer patients here in Ontario receive radiation treatment within the recommended maximum wait time of four weeks?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As you know, cancer has been one of the priority issues for our government. In fact, any money that has been saved has been reinvested into cancer care. We are very pleased that we were able to set up Cancer Care Ontario in order to ensure that all people in this province, no matter where they live, would be able to access the same level of service everywhere and that there would be complete co-ordination. I am very pleased at the leadership that Cancer Care Ontario is taking and at the reduction we are seeing in waiting times, and also the comprehensive level of care we are able to provide.

Mr McGuinty: The answer I'm looking for is absolutely vital to cancer patients in Ontario. The fact of the matter is that only 32% of all cancer patients receive their treatment within the recommended time period. In fact, two thirds of cancer patients in Ontario are now waiting up to 11 weeks to receive radiation treatment. That is seven weeks beyond the recommended maximum.

You talk about Cancer Care Ontario. Here's a quote from Dr Fitch, the coordinator of supportive care at your Cancer Care Ontario. Dr Fitch says, "The government has no sense of urgency with respect to the needs of cancer patients and the service that they need." In fact, Cancer Care Ontario is presently looking for an additional \$16 million for their budget so they can extend the period of time offering radiation treatment to cancer patients. Sixteen million dollars. How come you can find \$47 million for political advertising in Ontario but you can't find \$16 million for cancer care patients?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Our government has invested more into cancer care than any previous government. In fact, I am very pleased to say that we announced \$24.3 million over four years into the Ontario breast screening program, and that means that 30% of the women who are going to be screened will now be in a position where they won't face the death that they might have if they hadn't been screened.

I also want to indicate to you that recently we expanded funding for paediatric oncology in this province. We have also added \$11 million in annual funding to improve anticancer drug therapy. And the list goes on and on: \$300,000 for cervical cancer, \$700,000 to target women not currently screened. We also contributed \$5 million for cancer research through Cancer Care Ontario and Princess Margaret Hospital.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have proposed three new cancer centres in this province. That means that people will not have to travel as far. They will be in Peel region, they will be in Durham, and they are proposed to be —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to inform all members of the House that we have in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from Sicily led by Dr

Antonio Cammalleri, mayor of Cattolica Ericea. Welcome.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): In the absence of the Premier, a question to the Minister of Citizenship. Your government's shameful bill on persons with disabilities comes from a Premier with shameful attitudes towards the disabled.

I'm quoting from an article that was in the Toronto Star on Tuesday, May 30, 1995, where Mike Harris, leader of the Conservatives, says:

"Now here is a disabled person, only 50% as good as an able-bodied worker, but you must hire them and pay them as much as an able-bodied person. That's nonsense. Why should that employer? It doesn't make any sense."

That's the Premier's attitude towards the disabled, a shameful stereotype.

Minister, I want to ask you this: Did the Premier tell you to produce your bill? Did he tell you, the Premier who thinks that people with disabilities are only half as good, to produce a bill that's not even half as good?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I would say that I totally disagree with what you say about the Premier. He has been totally supportive in moving forward to make Ontario more accessible for the disabled. We have been the first government in Canada to move forward with legislation to reduce and remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. I am proud of our bill.

I want to say that in addition to the bill, what people tend to overlook is that we are also bringing in an employment committee that is going to work for employment for people who have disabilities. We are announcing an \$800,000 incentive fund that is going to work towards broad-based and community access projects that again are going to reduce barriers for people with disabilities and lead to their employment.

I have had the total support of the Premier in moving forward with this bill.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): No doubt you have the total support of the Premier in doing nothing, because that's what you're doing for persons with disabilities: nothing, a big, fat nothing.

You say you're going to strike a committee. Bill Davis's government had the same committee in 1980. There's nothing in your bill that the NDP Bob Rae government wasn't already doing. In fact, there's nothing in your bill that you are not committed to do by virtue of the charter. The charter compels you to do it.

1430

Minister, in your own discussion paper you said: "Getting to work, borrowing a book from the library, using a pay phone, going to the movies, eating in a restaurant, these are ordinary activities for most citizens, but this is not the case for many Ontarians. Barriers can

prevent Ontarians from participating in the community." Well, your bill doesn't do one thing to address any of that. It won't help them get to work, it won't help them borrow a book, it won't help them use a pay phone, it won't help them go to a movie or eat in a restaurant.

They are tired of talking to you. They want to meet with the Premier face to face. Will you withdraw this bill, will you set up a meeting and will you have the Premier answer directly to persons with disabilities in this province?

Hon Ms Bassett: Of course I will not withdraw the bill. We are doing more than your government ever dreamed of doing.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is also for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. I have had inquiries in my riding from community leaders — these are municipal politicians and also the leaders of local charities — who have been asking me about the unprecedented \$100-million fund that our government has brought forward for charities.

My understanding is that the decisions to distribute this \$100 million are to be made by local people on local teams. Minister, I wonder if you can advise the House where these people are being recommended from. Where are you getting the names of these volunteer decision-makers?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I want to thank the honourable member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay for the question. I want to clarify that the new Ontario Trillium Foundation will be the organization administering this exciting new fund and hundreds of volunteers across the province in local communities have been organized into local grant review teams. These volunteer members, on the advice of our summer consultations, are coming from municipalities, key charities like the United Way and the March of Dimes, and the recommendations of local MPPs on both sides of the House.

I sent out a letter informing all MPPs that this is the process, and MPPs on both sides of the House have sent in their local people in their areas to be members on these grant review teams. It's the process that people asked for and it's the democratic way to go about it.

Mr Grimmett: It certainly is reassuring to hear that the decision-makers are going to come from local organizations and that the recommendations are being made by members from both sides of the House. Minister, can you advise when the local charities in my riding will have an opportunity get this money and when these teams will be set up?

Hon Ms Bassett: I want to say to the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay that the local grant review teams are going to be up and running as soon as possible. We've already received over 200 applications from people from across the province. We want to get them operational early in the new year so that the \$100 million will be

flowing through to fund the very valuable programs that so many of the local charities run and that are so necessary to our communities. Again, I'm pleased to report that we've extended the deadline once for these volunteer teams and I expect the grant review teams will be ready probably shortly after the new year.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the so-called Minister of Citizenship about her failed sham of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I want to quote to you from a letter dated October 26 that you received from the Ontarians With Disabilities Act Committee: "This was brought home to us most pointedly when attention turned to the feedback that you received from the late Chief Justice of Canada, Brian Dickson. You agreed...that you could receive advice from no greater legal authority than he. You are well aware that he advised you during the consultation process that this legislation must be compulsory. Yet you indicated during our...meeting that you were given parameters for the project — parameters set out in" your own "discussion paper." Among other things, that discussion paper said in its introduction, in its very first sentence, "Getting to work, borrowing a book from the library, using a pay phone, going to the movies, eating in a restaurant, these seem like ordinary activities to most citizens."

Can you tell us how your bill does these things? Can you tell us how your bill responds to your own discussion paper?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I would say to the honourable member, as I said again and again yesterday, that we are going to mandate a systemic review of all government activities in all government ministries. Literally thousands of activities that affect the lives of Ontarians directly and indirectly will be changed because of this legislation that we brought in.

In addition to that, what we're also going to be doing is bringing in other initiatives such as our employment committee. We are going to be having an information service referring people to how they can alter their workplaces. Since taking office in 1995, we have also brought in many initiatives that are going to help move forward the agenda for people with disabilities.

1440

Mr Duncan: We in the Ontario Liberal Party are disappointed that, like the NDP before you, you failed to deal with a real Ontarians with Disabilities Act, completely failed to deal with that.

Minister, you just outlined a number of initiatives that refer —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Is that a prop? Yes, that's a prop. Member for St Catharines. Who wrote that book?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Oh, I didn't realize it was a prop.

Mr Duncan: The minister's bill provides no legal authority for meaningful, certainly not compulsory, enhancements. The minister, on the second page of her two-and-a-half-page bill, provides for \$800,000. Minister, can you tell us why it is that you've got \$800,000 for the disabled in this province when you've got \$47 million for your lousy advertising campaigns to sell your own propaganda? Will you withdraw your bill and bring forward meaningful ODA legislation before this Legislature dissolves?

Hon Ms Bassett: I will not withdraw the bill. I am proud of this bill. This moves the agenda forward for people with disabilities and it is going to change what happens in this province for people who formerly have not been able to move forward because of their disabilities.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce Mr Bill Barlow from Cambridge, in the members' gallery, a member of the 32nd and 33rd parliaments. Welcome, sir.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Kelly Da Silva and her students from Oakwood Collegiate.

The Speaker: Welcome. Well, one of us was in order.

RIVERDALE HOSPITAL

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Minister of Health. In 16 short months, Riverdale Hospital is slated to close. The 435 severely disabled people being cared for there have nowhere to go. I have discussed this urgent matter with you and the minister responsible for long-term care on several occasions. You know that I want to work with you to find a solution to this problem. I sent you a letter today, asking if you will request the Health Services Restructuring Commission to reconsider its decision, given that the hospital was not granted long-term care funding, as recommended by the commission, and that it remain open as a chronic care hospital.

There are some patients here today who came to see the Premier about this matter. I'm hoping you can give us some comfort today and say that, yes, you will ask the commission to do that.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Yes, I do want to congratulate the member. She has been very concerned about the patients at Riverdale and she has certainly endeavoured to ensure that these individuals would continue to receive the high-quality care they have been receiving.

We have been in communication with the officials at Riverdale. We have indicated that we will work with them. We want to make sure that in any planning and any implementation of the commission directives, they are fully involved. I want to assure you that all the patients

there right now are going to have their needs assessed, and their accommodation in future will be based on their specific needs.

Ms Churley: Minister, you know that some patients came down today with a letter to the Premier expressing their deep concern and anguish and frustration at the response they're getting from you and the Minister of Long-Term Care. You know that. They need answers now. They're severely disabled and they're frightened about what's going to happen to them. I want you to know that I will not give up and that these patients will not give up. We'll be on your case every single day.

I also ask in my letter if, at the very least, you will delay the closing date for Riverdale Hospital to give the hospital and the community more time to plan for the future. You have shown in other circumstances that you have the flexibility and the ability to do this. Please, Minister, I am pleading with you now for the patients of Riverdale Hospital that you will at least give us that today. Say that you will announce the delay of the closing of this hospital.

Hon Mrs Witmer: That assurance was already provided in the letter of October 22 that went to Mr Wilson from Mr Sapsford, the assistant deputy minister. It states that "if this plan" — the plan dealing with the implementation of the direction — "requires adjustment to the...closure date, the Ministry of Health will undertake to secure this change with the commission. The hospital will not be closed until all patients are accommodated based on their needs." So I give you my assurance that this will indeed happen. We've already confirmed this in our letter of October 22.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): My question is directed to the Minister of Education and Training and it is in regard to the Maclean's magazine annual review of the state of our universities across Canada, including Ontario. That survey indicates that at least three Ontario universities are in the top five medical doctoral universities, two of our Ontario universities are in the top primary undergraduate university status and three are in the top five comprehensive universities overall.

My question to you, Minister, is, what specific benefits and advantages through the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Finance have we made in creating this state of affairs and how does this contrast with the deliberate intention to describe our universities not as centres of excellence but as centres in decline?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I think the question indicates that sometimes, if you listen to the rhetoric on the other side of the House, everything is doom and gloom in terms of our post-secondary institutions, whereas the reality is that we have among the best post-secondary institutions in the world right here in Ontario.

1450

The Maclean's rating that they do every year looks at a number of different categories in terms of class size, faculties, finances, library support for students, and I'm really pleased to say that institutions such as the University of Toronto, Queen's, Western and McMaster are all institutions that really do well. In other categories, Guelph, York, Carleton and Windsor are universities that do outstandingly in terms of the situation right across Canada.

I'm pleased to say that last year there were well over 400,000 students attending post-secondary institutions in Ontario —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Hastings: Combined with our major improvements in the state of university affairs —

Laughter.

Mr Hastings: — contrasting with the laughter, the hysterical gales of indifference from across the way, what specific improvements have we made in terms of reform for student assistance to make our learning institutions much more accessible today compared to where they were many years ago?

Hon David Johnson: The opposition may consider this to be a laughing matter. I consider post-secondary institutions to be a most serious issue. I'm pleased to say that this government has directed about \$3.3 billion this year to student support, \$3.3 billion in terms of tax expenditures and ordinary expenditures to support our students: the Ontario student assistance program, well over half a billion dollars a year directed to students who need that sort of support; the Ontario student opportunity trust fund, over \$30 million this year; the set-aside for any tuition increase if any institutions go that way, some \$85 million this year.

We have just this past week announced the access grants to various institutions, amounting to \$29 million over the next three years, to institutions such as Brock University, with over \$4 million to Brock University in extra assistance just this week; to Laurentian, over \$2 million; to Wilfrid Laurier, over \$2 million; to York University, about \$12 million in additional support.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: That's why we have the best institutions in Canada, and that's why we have the highest participation rate ever in the history of Ontario —

The Speaker: Thank you.

DOCTORS' SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Health in regard to your visiting specialists clinic program. In a letter dated November 5 from your ministry to hospital administrators you say, "Expenses relating to clerical support staff and professional assistance will no longer be reimbursed through the underserved area program for clinics after December 31."

Do you know what that means? That means the specialists who now visit the communities in rural Ontario will not be visiting; they cannot afford to. In Algoma-Manitoulin, over 25,000 patients now take advantage of this service. They will now have to go to the Sault or Sudbury or Toronto. It means diminished access to care. It means a net cost to the government of Ontario, to the taxpayers of Ontario of over \$1 million, and a huge and unacceptable inconvenience to the people I represent. Why are you doing this?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We actually have been expanding the opportunities and the funding for the underserved areas. In fact, yesterday I made an announcement of \$5 million where we were allocating additional nurse practitioners, about 121 nurse practitioners in this province, who were primarily going to be assigned to underserved rural northern communities.

As you know, we have been expanding our globally funded group practice initiative as well. We have done work in collaboration with the Ontario Medical Association in order to ensure that we can get the doctors, the specialists, the nurse practitioners, all members of the health team, into the places where they need to be to serve the people.

Mr Michael Brown: What colour is the sky in your world? All but one of the specialists who have been contacted have said they will not be visiting under these circumstances; they cannot afford to. In my constituency alone, it amounts to 25,000 people; across northern Ontario it's probably in the hundreds of thousands. That means they will not have access locally to the specialists they need. You will be requiring them to drive through all kinds of weather, hundreds of kilometres, to see specialists they can now go to their local hospital to see.

This is your policy. This is wrong-headed. You could afford, if you weren't paying the travel grants that you're going to be able to afford, to spend even more money on your useless propaganda. Put it into patient care. Put the specialists in our communities. We deserve to have those specialists coming out and seeing us. They want to. They want to be able to afford it. Minister, will you stop this wrong-headed policy and reinvest that money in patient care in my constituency and the others across northern Ontario and rural Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Our government has moved forward in a way that we have recognized the very unique needs of northern communities. As you know, we provided \$36.4 million to the globally funded group practice and we have provided other related funding initiatives. We have also provided the Scott sessional fee of \$70 per hour to 78 hospitals. Every year we have the underserved tour in order that specialists and physicians can be encouraged to locate in the north.

We also have an Internet registry to encourage doctors to go north. We have been moving forward in a way no previous government has done in order that we can identify the unique needs. As I said yesterday, we took another very significant step in order to increase access to

health services to the people in the north by our investment of \$5 million for 121 additional —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: During question period, the leader of the third party alleged that the Minister of Education lied. I would ask you to ask him to withdraw that remark.

The Speaker: Hold on. I didn't hear it. If it happened, I'd certainly give the leader of the third party an opportunity to withdraw it.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Speaker, I quoted from an article. If he wants me to withdraw it here, I will, but I'll say it outside.

The Speaker: Now that you've said that you quoted from a direct quote, you did say it in the House. I have to ask you to withdraw it now. Can you withdraw it please?

Mr Hampton: I will withdraw it but it is a true remark. The parent in question heard the minister's answer.

The Speaker: Now we're into debate. Thank you very much.

Mr Hampton: Mr Speaker, I'm asking for unanimous consent for a motion in which the House would add its voice to the international outcry against the imminent execution in Texas of a Canadian citizen, Stanley Faulder. I'm asking the House for unanimous consent to place a motion that would support Amnesty International in its appeal to stop the scheduled execution. It would call on the governor of Texas, George Bush, to conduct a full and fair clemency hearing in the case of Stanley Faulder, who is scheduled to be executed on December 10 of this year.

The Speaker: Is that agreed? I heard a no.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a further petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government cuts have caused a major decline in our health care system; and

"Whereas our hospitals no longer provide attentive, compassionate care to patients; and

"Whereas severe cuts to hospital staff and nurses have often caused very ill patients to wait long hours; and

"Whereas access to quality health care can no longer be provided and the government's cuts to the Ontario health care system are a real barrier for the people of Ontario;

"Therefore, we urge the Premier and this government to stop the cuts and give us a universal and accessible health care system. We pay for it and we demand to be treated fairly and equally by our own government."

I agree with the content of the petition and I will affix my signature to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): There's too much noise; we'll just wait for a few minutes.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario which reads:

"Whereas it is important to honour the courageous memory and sacrifices of Canada's war dead and of our veterans who fought in defence of our national rights and freedoms;

"Whereas there is a need for succeeding generations of young, school-age Canadians to learn more about the true meaning of Remembrance Day;

"Whereas Ontario veterans' associations have created excellent education materials for use in Ontario schools on the meaning and significance of Remembrance Day;

"Whereas a special Remembrance Day curriculum for all grades in Ontario's education system, developed on the basis of the programs by the Ontario veterans' associations and involving their direct participation, would increase awareness of and appreciation for Canada's wartime sacrifices in the hearts and minds of all Ontario citizens;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial Ministry of Education and Training ensure that a suitable Remembrance Day learning unit be included in the curriculum of all grades of Ontario's education system."

I support the petition and I affix my signature.

1500

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I was pleased to receive this petition last evening at a child care meeting in North York. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing daycare spaces is critical for the families in Toronto that need access to them; and

"Whereas the well-being of children should not be sacrificed for tax cuts; and

"Whereas the provincial government has significantly cut the budgets for Toronto school boards; and

"Whereas under the provincial government's ill-conceived Bill 160 there is no flexibility for boards to make up for the cuts; and

"Whereas daycare spaces in schools are now threatened by these cuts with the prospect of full-cost recovery arrangements with daycares and the threat of school closures;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to repeal Bill 160 immediately; and further be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario instruct the Minister of Education and Training to restore meaningful and flexible funding to the Toronto school boards to ensure that they are able to continue to accommodate our community daycares; and further be it resolved that the Honourable Dave Johnson, Minister of Education and Training, take responsibility for his government's funding cuts rather than passing the buck

to school boards who have no control over provincial government spending cuts."

I am happy to sign this petition.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislature from Kristy Surge of Bowmanville. The petition is from the students at Bowmanville High School under district board 14. It reads as follows:

"I hereby sign the following petition to protest Mike Harris's cuts to our educational system. We want our sports and extracurricular activities back."

It's signed by Mark Hamilton and Teresa Potier.

I've written a letter to Judi Armstrong, the chair of district board 14, supporting the students. I just want for the record to read, "I've urged the board to listen to the concerns of students and not to use them as pawns in this situation." Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to put that on the record.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a further petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It says:

"Say No to the Privatization of Health Care.

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario;

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale;

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario;

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not privatize our health care services."

I concur with the intent of the petitioners and I will affix my signature to it.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Bud Wildman (Algonia): I have a petition signed by 55 Canadians. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas many questions concerning the events preceding, during and after the fatal shooting of Anthony Dudley George on September 6, 1995, at Ipperwash Provincial Park, where over 200 armed officers were sent to control 25 unarmed men and women, have not been answered;

"Whereas the officers involved in the beating of Bernard George were not held responsible for their actions;

"Whereas the Ontario Provincial Police refused to co-operate with the special investigations unit in recording the details of that night;

"Whereas the influence and communications of Lambton MPP Marcel Beaubien with the government have been verified through transcripts presented in the Legislature;

"Whereas the trust of the portfolio of native affairs held by Attorney General Charles Harnick is compromised by his continued refusal for a full public inquiry into the events of Ipperwash;

"Whereas the promised return of Camp Ipperwash to the Stoney Point Nation by the federal ministry of defence and the serious negotiation of land claims by both the provincial and federal governments could have avoided a conflict;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that a full public inquiry be held into the events surrounding the fatal shooting of Dudley George on September 6, 1995, to eliminate all misconceptions held by and about the government, the OPP and the Stoney Point people."

I support the demand for a public inquiry wholeheartedly and add my name to this petition.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 50 people:

"Whereas most Ontario residents require adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology; and

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services, even of the acute care kind;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature, as I'm in complete agreement with the petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a further petition that has been circulated regarding the dangerous situation with regard to Highway 17 north in the vicinity of the so-called Mile Hill in Goulais River. I have previously introduced a similar petition with almost 2,000 names. There are a further 38 names on this petition, requesting that the government of Ontario install appropriate lighting and ensure better maintenance to prevent accidents in this vicinity. I'm signing my name to it.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have additional petitions — previously 10,000 — calling for a tax freeze and restructuring of municipal government in Haldimand-Norfolk:

"Whereas the Haldimand-Norfolk region has down-loaded a 17% tax hike on residents, without attempting to cut its own costs; and

"Whereas for the past 25 years, there have been meetings, petitions, referenda, and studies calling for a restructuring of regional government; and

"Whereas 80% of the residents did not want regional government in the first place, and in recent referenda, 75% of the residents of the city of Nanticoke, and 60% of the residents of the town of Simcoe voted against retaining regional government; and

"Whereas residents in the region do not want and clearly cannot afford two levels of municipal government;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that provincial legislation be passed to freeze taxes and eliminate regional government in Haldimand-Norfolk, and institute a form of restructured local government in keeping with the wishes and the financial means of the local residents."

I sign this petition.

DIABETES EDUCATION SERVICES

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): Seeing that the funding for the diabetes education services is going to be curtailed on March 31, I still have a great number of people who are interested in seeing that funding put on a permanent basis. I have a petition here that reads:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the diabetes education services at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora, Ontario, is an essential component of health care, we, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Health of Ontario as follows:

"For permanent funding for the diabetes education services at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital."

I've certainly added my name to that petition.

1510

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition to present on behalf of Margaret Marland, the MPP for Mississauga South, who as a minister cannot present petitions, but I'll do so on her behalf.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense or sell chemicals or other devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences;

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training and employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical or accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and such unjust discrimination."

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has announced its intention of dumping the financing for ambulances, social housing and public health care services on to the backs of municipalities;

"Whereas the irresponsible action of this government will create a shortfall of more than \$18 million for local governments in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Whereas local representatives in St Catharines and the Niagara region will be forced to either raise property taxes or cut services or both; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris Conservative government called municipal representatives 'whiners' when they tried to explain to him that his proposal was unfair and would create gaps in important services such as the delivery of public health; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs accused local representatives of being opportunistic simply because they attempted to point out that the Mike Harris proposal was unfair and primarily designed to fund his ill-advised tax scheme; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government refuses to listen to the representatives who work most closely with their constituents;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris Conservative government to scrap its downloading plan, which will cause either an increase in property taxes or an unacceptable cut to important local services or both."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario, a petition to end the spring bear hunt.

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas 100% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of the bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals that are hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the

hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

I support the petition and affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIRNESS FOR PROPERTY
TAXPAYERS ACT, 1998LOI DE 1998 SUR LE TRAITEMENT
ÉQUITABLE DES CONTRIBUABLES
DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 79, An Act to amend the Assessment Act, Municipal Act, Assessment Review Board Act and Education Act in respect of property taxes / Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière, la Loi sur les municipalités, la Loi sur la Commission de révision de l'évaluation foncière et la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne l'impôt foncier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments on Mr Rollin's speech.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I well recall the speech from yesterday, as I was in the House, and I found it very interesting, as always. I was surprised that the member didn't note — perhaps he didn't have time because we have only 20 minutes now — that this was in fact the seventh bill which this government has brought in to deal with property taxes, and indeed if it had been done appropriately in the first place, if it had been thought through carefully, if the impact studies had been shared with everyone, then probably we would have seen this House deal with one bill.

The member will recall, I'm certain, that the previous bill really left the situation where the huge bank towers in downtown Toronto were getting a wonderful break in their property taxes. Now of course we had a large outcry from smaller businesses, who said, "Mike Harris has given a windfall to the big banks, to those huge towers." It was hurting the small business people. So at long last the government, in its seventh attempt, is now trying to redress that, though I must say only temporarily, because what it's going to do is postpone the day of reckoning.

Small businesses will take any crumb they can get from the government, the government having made that mistake in the first place, but they have to know that essentially what Mike Harris did over the long term was shift the burden on to smaller businesses and give a break to the big banks. With all those bank towers out there, that's a lot of lost revenue for the municipalities.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I too, like the member for St Catharines, was pleased to hear the speech last evening by my colleague the member for Quinte. I thought the member for Quinte talked about all the salient political issues in this debate. He talked about some of the municipalities in his constituency which chose to use the tools and how they were able to assist the small business,

but he also chose to speak about some of the municipalities in his riding that did not, and how he and other members of the government caucus were simply unprepared to sit by and watch some big businesses get huge rebates with the cost being borne immediately by small business. I certainly agree with the member.

The member does this regularly, and very effectively represents a good number of small business people in his constituency. The member has a lot of experience in this regard, because unlike myself he's run a small business and he knows what it's like to create jobs. So it's very important that he brings that perspective to our deliberation here today and gives those of us who have not worked in the small business sector what it's like in the reality on the front lines of business life in small-town Ontario and medium-sized towns and cities in Ontario.

I was, however, extremely shocked with the member's speech and surprised to learn about all the tax increases on small business by the Liberal and NDP governments over the last 10 years. The member spoke at great length, listed them all off. He spoke of the commercial concentration tax that whacked businesses here in the city of Toronto. He spoke of the employer health tax, the killer of jobs. I think that's the number one target of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, because it's a real job killer for small business. The 30% he spoke of, Workers' Compensation Board premiums; I know he shares my enthusiasm for cutting Workers' Compensation Board premiums by 5% and the importance of this government's plan to cut corporate taxes for small business by 50% over the next eight years, because small business creates jobs.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): As it has been said many times in this House, we are dealing now with the seventh bill in regard to property taxes and I've noted the great amount of confusion out there. Just yesterday I spoke to a clerk-treasurer in one of the communities in my riding. He still wasn't sure when the appeal date was: "Is it October 30? Has it been extended to December 31?" Again, he just did not know. He's been having questions coming to him from small business. He's had a good number of property owners questioning him as to where the government is in terms of taxation of small businesses.

Small businesses are anxious out there. When we start talking taxes, they get very anxious. The confusion that has been created by this government is to no end and it seems that every time we turn around people are wondering where they're going, why they didn't get there in the first six bills, and a lot of questions around why the first six drafts were not able to be forwarded on and become law.

Again, a good amount of confusion, not only among the small business sector but among the general public, and a good amount of confusion around what is being dumped or downloaded on to the municipalities and exactly how this is going to affect their taxation and their user fees within those municipalities. You speak to one clerk-treasurer, you'll get one answer; another one will give you another answer. None of them is happy with this legislation and the confusion that it has created.

1520

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I think the member has made an excellent point that the government still hasn't been able to get its property tax assessment scheme straight, after six previous attempts. In fact, we hadn't even finished dealing with bill number six before bill number seven got called and put on to the order paper. You'll recall that bill number six was to extend the date for appeals. Originally that was going to be extended to October 30, and that was as a result of the urging of Tony Silipo, the NDP member from our caucus, who urged the government to do this. Even October 30 wasn't a long enough time for people to put in their appeals.

What this government has done has really thrown the property tax assessment process into chaos. This is a government that likes to pride itself on good management, but once again, we see legislation that is ill thought out being rammed through the Legislature hastily and then having to be amended at some later date to fix up the mistakes.

We're seeing a similar process with respect to Bill 55, the apprenticeship legislation, as well. The government has had two years to work on these reforms to apprenticeship legislation and just today is starting to introduce substantial amendments to that legislation. You would think that after two years of this extensive consultation they like to pride themselves, that they would have had an opportunity to get this right, but they didn't. This property tax assessment bill is just another example of the government hastily putting through legislation that's ill conceived and ill thought out.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Quinte, you have two minutes.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I would like to thank the members for St Catharines, Nepean, Kenora and Windsor-Riverside for their comments.

The member for St Catharines was worrying about the bank towers getting back so much money and they were going to have a windfall. This is one of the reasons that we as a government have seen fit to put in classifications. If those people would have put those bank towers in the classifications, they had the opportunity in that bill to freeze their taxes to where they were previously and make sure that there isn't a windfall profit for those people to have their taxes go down at such an exorbitant rate and for the smaller people to have to pick up the assessment or their tax dollars. If the municipalities had chosen to use all the tools in the tool kit when the first bill came in, and to work with us as a government to make sure that we were trying to achieve the same goals, we wouldn't have had that.

The last previous governments, be it the Liberal government or the NDP government, both felt very strongly that they needed to do something with the taxation problems in the province of Ontario, and what did they do? They looked at it. They looked at it and then said: "It's too big, it's too scary. We're going to move away from it."

Yes, we brought in two or three bills or six bills, as you say, or even seven, to make the thing right, but so be it. Is it not better to bring in seven bills and get the thing right than to sit there for ever and ever and let it go by without having it right? Because that's what the last two administrations tried to do. They looked at it. They said: "It's too big of a problem. We're not going to tackle it. If we tackle it, we're going to be taken to task over it. There are so many people in the province who are going to be up and down and it's not going to be fair."

It doesn't matter when you do something; if you do the right thing, you're never wrong. Even though it is going to take us a few times to do it to make sure that it is right, the taxpayers and the people who create jobs in the province will be the winners.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bradley: The point I want to get to in this, and I leave off where my friend from —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Thank you. I appreciate the member for Algoma scaring some of the government members into the House to hear what is obviously going to be a landmark address in the House of sorts by somebody somewhere along the line.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Landmark or landfill?

Mr Bradley: "Land mine" is perhaps a better phrase. As you can see, all my own colleagues are here to hear this and the government benches are full, so I'm delighted to be able to participate in this debate.

I want to start off where my friend the member for Quinte left off. I want to start there, because he was talking about the fact that the government — he didn't use these words — had botched this on six previous occasions, had fumbled the ball, as they say in football, had bungled with this particular bill, which deals with property tax reform. This is the seventh bill. I can't even keep track of how many; they've got different names every time. Now it's called Bill 79.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. When the members who are not on the floor are talking louder than the person who is addressing the House, there's something wrong.

Mr Bradley: I'll try to speak in a louder fashion, then, Mr Speaker. But I know there are other important conversations that must go on.

One of the criticisms of this government, even from the people who agree with it, and I don't agree with it — some of the Conservative members are nodding right now; I don't know whether they're nodding off or they're nodding in agreement — is that this government moves too

quickly, too drastically, too recklessly and without looking at the consequences of their actions. I know my friend from Etobicoke-Humber probably thinks, in his heart of hearts, that that's the case. He would have hoped that Mike Harris and the cabinet would have taken just a little bit longer to assess the impact of the property tax reform and would have implemented it without seven bills.

Most governments, when they're bringing in legislation of this kind, bring in one bill. The first bill they get it right, because they do extensive consultation, ordinarily they do some impact studies that will give them an idea of what the results of the bill would be, they consult with their own backbenchers and the civil service and everybody in the province and then they come forward with a reasonable bill. Maybe not everybody will agree, but it's one they can live with. This government is now bringing in its seventh bill.

1530

A lot of municipal councillors used to think, "One thing you can say about the Tories is that they're competent and businesslike." Then they see seven different bills coming in and they don't know what to make of that. They've lost faith.

I want to quote to you from the clerks and treasurers of Ontario. They're a non-partisan group.

Laughter.

Mr Bradley: I'm laughing because my colleagues on the other side are laughing. The clerks and treasurers are the impartial people. I can't think of one who carries a political card, and the member for Dufferin-Peel agrees with me.

Here's what they had to say about this situation. The Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers said the following:

"This government, in its haste, is making legislation by the seat of its pants, without proper thought or planning. Yesterday's bill is amended by today's, which will likely be amended by tomorrow's."

These people must have a crystal ball, because they have seen what's happened. They have changed several times; we're now on the seventh bill. The members of the government caucus have had to be briefed seven different times now to find out what they're supposed to say when they get home to their municipal councillors, who are flummoxed and flabbergasted by this turn of events. First of all, they had to withhold their tax bills this year. They couldn't send them out because they didn't know what was going to be in those bills. Finally, some of them said, "We have to send them out, no matter what." They just got the bills out and the government came back again and said: "Guess what. You've got to change again."

So the ball gets fumbled by about 15 different people in this government and finally they think they've got the seventh and final bill. We'll see what happens.

There was a call out there, a reasonable call from many people for moving back the deadline for appeals of assessment. When the Liberal members of the committee which was dealing with another bill dealing with property tax moved a motion which would have extended the

deadline for appeals to property taxes, the members of the government turned it down, slammed the door shut on it; and today they are crawling in, rather sheepishly and having to postpone until the very end of this year the deadline for appeal. That's what we said they should have done in the first place, because of the mess they've made of so-called property tax reform.

As I mentioned a little earlier, the bill as it was forthcoming, I think it was the sixth bill, still meant that the big bank towers, the big businesses, the big box stores, were to get a tax break from the government, and the small businesses as a result had to pay more. I know the people who are in charge of the big bank towers in downtown Toronto were delighted. They probably came to the big Tory fundraiser in Toronto, shelled out the money and said: "Thank you, Mike Harris, for giving us a huge tax break. After all, we've only made hundreds of millions of dollars in profit this year, but it's nice to know we don't have to pay more in property taxes." They should be thanking Mike Harris, and they probably sent a letter to the Premier in this regard.

Unlike the letter that came from Ford and General Motors and Chrysler today, which said that you've botched —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Chrysler-Daimler, the new name they have now.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): DaimlerChrysler.

Mr Bradley: DaimlerChrysler is the new name.

All these top officials in these companies today sent a letter — at least we had the letter read in the House today — that said: "You've botched another bill. You've botched the bill on apprenticeships." Just when the government thought it had appeased people, because there were a couple of big business groups that said it was good, the Big Three in car-making in Ontario said: "No way. We're standing shoulder to shoulder with the brothers and sisters" from the CAW, in this case, "to say this won't work, that you shouldn't proceed with this bill as it is." That's what I think many of the small businesses said about this bill when they found out that the big bank towers were going to do so well and the small businesses were going to get kicked in the shins by Mike Harris and the Conservative government.

What happened was that the structural shift in tax burden was from large to small businesses. We think the small businesses need that kind of tax break. The shift was implemented knowingly by the Harris government and was done, so-called, in the name of fairness. In other words, people weren't being fair to the big bank towers.

As tax bills finally went out this summer, it was clear that small businesses across the province were facing huge tax increases and that something had to be done to address the situation. These policy changes are going to mean the following. Many businesses that were expecting decreases now have to pay more taxes. They're all mixed up; they don't know what to believe from this government. The government is saying, apparently, that the 20% tax

increases for small businesses, due to the elimination of the business occupancy tax, are acceptable. I don't think many people in the small business community will agree with that. Municipalities will have to revise and reissue all commercial and industrial tax bills. Again, another chaotic situation. Municipalities will have to calculate downloading related tax costs separate from the remainder of their expenditures.

What we are seeing then is a complete mess. We warned the government about this several times. But as is so often the case, the members of the Harris government don't listen. They have a small group of advisors that I call the "whiz kids," the 20-something and 30-something YPCs, Young Progressive Conservatives, who have all the answers to the world's problems and have the Premier's ear, apparently, but not the ear, necessarily, of the caucus. They said: "Come on, just let's press forward with this. Don't worry about those impact studies. Let's keep them a secret. If people find out what's in those impact studies they're going to be up in arms."

I remember the marches in west Toronto, led by the former minister and now the member, Tony Ruprecht through the riding of Parkdale, and Mike Colle, the member for Oakwood. These were people who led the march against that original bill, the fight against that bill. I know those small business people appreciated that very much.

What we have to cloud the situation is the downloading provision; that is, the government decided it was going to take a number of responsibilities that it previously had — that's the provincial government, Mike Harris — and they were going to download or thrust them on the municipalities. In exchange, they would take some other responsibilities. Some of the municipalities said, "Well, that's fair as long as it's revenue-neutral." Mike Harris said, "Don't worry, it's revenue-neutral." He complained that the municipal people were whiners. The Minister of Municipal Affairs said they were "opportunistic" just because the municipal people were saying, "Come on, we're seeing a huge increase in our financial responsibilities."

I'm going to relate that to an announcement that was made yesterday. The Premier reannounced something about 1,000 police officers in Ontario. We all heard that announcement before but he reannounced it again with some fanfare. A lot of the front-line police officers I talked to said, "We'll believe it when we see it." Of course, the only new police officers many of them have seen are those cardboard cut-outs that are seen around Toronto now. They're the only new police officers that we're apparently seeing.

Those front-line police officers from Niagara region know, for instance, that because the regional municipality of Niagara's council has had \$18 million more in terms of responsibility downloaded upon it by the provincial government, there's no guarantee that the regional government will take up the offer of paying 50% of the cost of new police officers.

On one hand, there's a lot of fanfare, big-time announcement; on the other hand, the government has

placed the regional government of Niagara, for instance, in a difficult position by downloading all these responsibilities and then running away.

My colleagues in the opposition will all know that the tactic that the Conservative government members use is they point the finger at the local government. Indeed, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, Mr Barrett, is bringing forward a motion on Thursday to abolish the regional government in his area because, he says, "The regional government has been responsible for a tax increase." If anything, he should be bringing in a motion or bill chastising Mike Harris for downloading all the responsibilities on to the regional government.

1540

I'm no fan of regions. I have not been one to defend them in the past, but I'm going to tell you fair is fair. I want to be fair to them now and say I understand why they increased taxes. It's because Mike Harris and his colleagues downloaded so many responsibilities, to the tune of \$18 million more for Niagara.

What the local governments have to do as a result — and they've already cut. We know local governments have already made deep cuts in their services. What they're having to do now is make even deeper cuts and start charging user fees, which of course are fine for rich people. If you're Conrad Black a user fee doesn't bother you. You've got millions of dollars, maybe billions, and you don't have to worry about user fees. But for the average person, for the person of a modest income, user fees have a marked effect, a tremendous effect.

In St Catharines now in one of the popular house leagues, if a girl or boy wishes to sign up for hockey, I believe it's now \$260 in terms of a registration fee.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: That's fine for Rob Sampson. That's fine for somebody who's on a cabinet minister's salary or an MPP's salary, but that's very difficult for young people in the community of modest means whose parents can't afford it and who have to shell out the \$260 for that particular person.

What has happened is the municipalities, because of the downloading, have had to increase user fees for the use of the — I just had a note sent to me here that says: "Be dynamic. We are taping the Jim Bradley Christmas video." I don't know who says that here.

Interjection: Let's give him a big hand.

Applause.

Mr Bradley: You're just trying to make me lose my train of thought this afternoon, I know that. Where was I? Was I on the Hotel Dieu Hospital or not? I forget. That reminds me. I'm wondering how these tax changes might impact on hospitals, because, as you know, the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines has been ordered to close by Mike Harris's hospital destruction commission. That's all I'll say on that, because I know nobody wants to get up on a point of order. I'm just wondering how that would impact. I will have a petition tomorrow with 6,000 additional names on it, a real petition with 6,000 names on it from people opposed, in addition to the 60,000 who

have already signed a petition opposed to the closing of Hotel Dieu Hospital. But I digress and I wouldn't want to do that, because I'm noted for staying on the bill very closely that we're talking about.

I do want to say that as a result of user fees that are now becoming the vogue for municipalities, people of modest means are not able to access services provided by municipalities as well as people who are wealthy and powerful, and I mentioned just as an example Conrad Black. The name just comes to mind quickly, although there may be others in that category as well.

I look at what we have happening here. I feel bad for some of our municipal councillors, strong Conservatives. When Bill Davis was around they could say: "We're pretty proud of what Bill Davis is doing. He's listening to municipalities. He's helped us out in certain ways." They could sit there with pride and smiles on their faces and say, "We're proud to be Conservatives," in those days. Now municipal councillors are in hiding very often if they are Conservatives, unless they're Reform-a-Tories. But if they are the old-style Conservatives, the people who understood the importance of the community, who understood smaller units as being important, who didn't believe that big was automatically better when we're talking about government of any kind, those individuals have been embarrassed by seven different bills coming in and by the downloading exercise.

Some still are apologists, I understand that, but most have abandoned those apologies and are now standing up for their local people. They're not pointing the finger at their own council or at other municipal councillors; they're pointing the finger where it should be pointed, at Queen's Park, and at the fact that Mike Harris has downloaded all of these responsibilities on municipalities and has not provided the funding that would go with those responsibilities.

The government has the power to pass any bill. It keeps trying to correct its legislation. I know the big bank towers and the big businesses will be sad for at least a couple of years, because now, instead of getting the huge tax break from Mike Harris that they were going to get all in one year, they're going to have to have it staged in.

Small businesses should know, however, that the day of reckoning is coming. While there's a cap, they're still going to get zapped by Mike Harris and the Conservatives. They used to like to think they were going to be friendly towards these small businesses. I can tell you, in terms of property taxes, they certainly aren't. That's something all of them have noted so far.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for St Catharines, particularly when he, as he did today, talks so clearly about what the Harris government is doing. I know he likes to remind us from time to time about where the real enemy is. There is one thing, at least, on which he and I will agree, and that is what Mike Harris has been doing in terms of downloading. He said that downloading millions of dollars of costs on to the property tax base is what has been at the

heart of the mess the Mike Harris government has got itself, but most importantly municipalities and taxpayers, into.

Gone are the days, it seems, when the government members used to remind us of the fact that there was only one taxpayer. It seems that Mike Harris and his government have forgotten that when it comes to what they've done with this whole issue of property taxes, because they have conveniently been able to push many costs, some \$600 million worth of costs, on to the property tax base. That, coupled with the changes they have made to the assessment system, has meant that many thousands of homeowners and small businesses have seen their property taxes increase substantially, not by virtue of getting any more service than they were getting before but simply because of the changes that the Mike Harris government has brought about.

Secondly, we've had the charade here of the government coming in with bill after bill, trying to fix the situation and the problem that they created, each time making the situation worse. Now we have the final episode of that, or perhaps the final episode of that, coming in at this late juncture in the year, in the calendar year as well as the tax year, which is actually going to result in situations where people who actually received decreases as a result of this Mike Harris tax scheme are going to have to actually pay it back to the municipalities, all of which is going to cause great consternation, great problems across the province and, I'm sure the member for St Catharines would remind us, equally so in his area of the province.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for St Catharines, except that I've never heard such misrepresentation of the facts in all my life. Both members who just spoke talked about downloading from the Harris government. I remind the honourable members that this government took seriously the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's challenge to respect municipal governments and to ensure that we delayed all the bureaucracy we have in this province and passed on the savings to the property taxpayer.

Downloading is absolutely revenue-neutral. You've been provided with those figures. There were some small savings targets that municipalities like the ones you referred to had to achieve. I tell you and remind you that we have a deficit in this province. If they couldn't achieve those savings targets, then God help us, because we have a debt. Once we've gotten rid of the deficit a year from now, we still have a huge debt, well over \$100 million, that all parties have accumulated in this province.

We have to find those 2% and 3% savings every year for the next 25 years to deal with that debt. So, if your municipality wasn't up to it today, then God help us in the future. Mike Harris did not download anything that would cost your municipality additional dollars, because we sent the dollars with it. It was revenue-neutral and the facts speak for themselves across this province.

We had to move to current value assessment. It's the only system that makes sense. I know in my municipalities in Simcoe county, the county council itself has said this will be an excellent system once we're through these transitional years. They realize that any property tax increases that occurred in this round were their responsibility, not Mike Harris's. He didn't download anything to the municipalities that cost them extra money provided they found their savings targets.

I think the honourable member deserves to tell his constituents the whole story and not just a partial, rather slanted story as the one he presented here in the House this afternoon.

1550

Mr Michlash: It's always a pleasure to comment on the speeches of the member for St Catharines. We know he doesn't make too many of them in the House and it's always a pleasure to actually comment on them.

It was very interesting to listen to the speaker just previously who was making comments on the member for St Catharines' speech. To listen to him talk about the debt is quite interesting, and to know that this government is adding, through their tax cut, \$5 billion a year to the debt. To listen to the member suggest that the debt has to be tackled when they're increasing it by that amount per year is really something else.

The member for St Catharines talked a little bit about advertising as well. What this government is paying out in terms of partisan advertising and going out to sell Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservatives is truly unreal. When you listen to all the problems we have in the province, when you talk about the problems in health care, when you hear about different situations in terms of what we heard earlier today about cancer treatment, in terms of education, the money being taken out of the classroom, just think of the amount of dollars that is being spent on partisan advertising that could actually go into those classrooms and into those hospitals.

Hospital closures is something else the member for St Catharines has touched on. We go back to that famous promise made by Mike Harris, "Yes, Robert, it is not my plan to close hospitals," when the now Premier was asked about that during the last campaign. I also remember the now Premier saying back then as well, "There is only one taxpayer." With the dumping and downloading that this government is doing, that taxpayer is certainly feeling it at the local level.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I want to commend the member for St Catharines for his remarks today and hope that in the half-hour that he spoke he had at least a 30-second clip that will be good for his Christmas message. I'm sure there will be something there that we can pull from.

I want to reinforce two points that he made.

The first is with respect to the complete incompetence demonstrated by this government in dealing with its introduction of market value in any number of communities across the province. I wonder if the word "fiasco" has any meaning for the Conservative Party today. People who

are watching this afternoon should understand that we are dealing with the seventh bill introduced by this government to try and fix the mistakes it has made in dealing with market value — the seventh bill. Each bill has been introduced to try and fix mistakes that came in the last, because the government was too rushed, too hurried and never did want to listen, as is usual for this group, to what others had to say about how to deal with this.

We had drive-by assessments that were done all across this province that have resulted in market value assessments that are very discriminatory, very different from one part of the province to another, and people understand that this is what's happened. But we are here today dealing with yet another mistake of this government and another bill to try and fix it, and God knows if we will fix it even with this bill.

Second, with respect to the download, you would have to be living in la-la land not to acknowledge that there is an impact of the download. The download is not revenue-neutral. Even with the savings that municipalities found, any number of northern municipalities had to receive money from this government so they would not have to cut services and not have to increase taxes. That's the reality. It has never been revenue-neutral.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, two minutes.

Mr Bradley: I appreciate the remarks from all of my colleagues. I thought the member for Sudbury East chose the correct word when she chose the word "fiasco" to describe what has happened with property tax reform under the Harris government.

What I fear is if we make any noise about this we'll get more government advertising. I remember a tape or a television commercial with the Premier in the arena. The only arena I've seen him in is full of people for a fundraiser for the Conservative Party — the wealthiest people in the province — when I talk about a political arena.

Hon Mr Wilson: He brings his kids to hockey.

Mr Bradley: I say to the Minister of Energy, who intervenes, the former staffer to a Conservative Mulroney government minister, that I understand when he takes a very partisan view of these things. He's a minister, he defends the government position well. I don't agree with him, but he's unyielding and a true believer. I want to give him credit for that.

I also want to mention that the advertising campaigns that we have seen right now, if you took the money from those advertising campaigns — we're not talking about the overall advertising, which is probably over \$100 million, but we're talking about the strictly partisan ads that we've seen on television and in the newspapers, and the pamphlets that come to our doors once a week now and they want people to fill it out so they'll have a database, they'll be able to send information back to those people, more propaganda to the people. Wouldn't it have been nice if the municipalities could have had access to some of those funds that are being squandered on clearly partisan ads on television? Wouldn't it be nice if hospitals could have been kept open and if services could be

provided to people? But instead the Harris government has chosen to squander it on self-serving political advertising.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Silipo: I'm glad to be able to join in this debate and want to thank the House for agreeing, as they did last night, to allow me to complete today the portion of our lead speech on this that was begun by my colleague from Cochrane North, our municipal affairs critic.

I just wanted to have the opportunity today to talk about this bill because it deals with an issue that all of us have been fairly involved in. Certainly I have in my own constituency of west-end Toronto, in Dovercourt. As I know from my colleagues, in many parts of the province this has been and continues to be a major issue, the whole rejigging of the property tax system that the Mike Harris government has spent so much energy on.

It's caused incredible uproar out there. It's caused also incredible hardship for many homeowners and many small businesses. In fact, as we've gone through this debate — and the debate has been a long one. It started way back at the beginning of the last calendar year when the government brought us back in early January to begin the famous Who Does What legislative process, which came about as a result of the government making decisions that it wanted to swap the costs for certain services between provincial taxes and property taxes. All of that has then played itself out through a number of bills. Who could forget the whole megacity debate that we had here in this House? Who can forget the many other pieces of legislation that we have had?

One important aspect that has run throughout all of that has been the rejigging of the property tax system, the changes that the Mike Harris government has made, first of all with respect to the costs that they have shifted back and forth between property taxes and provincial income taxes, as well as then the whole restructuring of the way in which we go about assessing property taxes per se, that is, the introduction of this new system which the government likes to call current value assessment, but which they from time to time have actually admitted is nothing other than market value assessment. What's the definition of current value assessment? It's simply the market value of the property, in this case, as it was in June 1996 and to be updated every couple of years, which is the same thing as what current value assessment is. In fact, one could argue that this isn't current value assessment because it's already dated by a couple of years.

Be that as it may, the point is that what we have seen as a result of the complexity of changes is the government creating an incredible problem, not just the political headache for itself, quite frankly, but also a real problem for many residents of the province.

I saw this in a significant way in my own community as we began to see the impacts of the download. We have been able to trace this back now, not just through our own number-crunching, but that which comes from municipality after municipality and indeed from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. There are clearly some \$600 million that in this trade-off between what should be

paid for — or what is being paid for, because what should be paid for is a whole other discussion, but what is being paid for through property taxes versus what is being paid for through the provincial income taxes and sales taxes and all the other forms of provincial taxes.

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At the end of the day, when all is said and done, even after you're taken into account the various transition funds, the various mitigation grants, the various ways to soften the blow, if you will, the bottom line is that municipalities collectively are going to be paying and property taxpayers in particular are going to be paying some \$600 million more of those same services than they were paying before, and that's without even beginning to take into account what might happen to some of those costs in the future.

I remind you that one of the significant costs that has been transferred on to the property tax system in a greater way than it was there before is the cost of social services, the social assistance system. Although the overall costs of that system have certainly been going down, in great part due to the cuts that the Harris government made to the monthly amounts that people are entitled to, the reality is that if over the next couple of years times become difficult again, as they may — none of us hopes that they will — given the cycle that our economy goes through, we will see municipalities in a harder position, in a more difficult position than they are today and certainly than they were before all of this started in terms of being able to handle those additional costs.

I remember when we were in government and during the depth of the toughest recession since the 1930s, that even with the 50-50 cost-sharing that was there for social assistance costs, we had to resort — rather to the 80-20 split; what am I saying 50-50? — to picking up a larger share of those costs, of the municipal costs, simply because municipalities were not going to be able to carry on those additional costs. So imagine what's going to happen if we find ourselves in that same cycle again and a situation this time where municipalities now, by law, have to pick up a greater proportion of the costs than they did before. That is going to create an incredible increased hardship on to the property tax base and it's going to mean increased costs on to the municipalities.

All of that brings me more directly to the bill that we have in front of us. Again we need to remind people that what we have in front of us is the seventh iteration of property tax reform from the Mike Harris government. This is bill number seven in a sequence; not in a sequence that says, "We're going to do this piece today and that piece tomorrow and that piece another day," and therefore you require a number of different pieces of legislation, but a sequence which comes about simply as a way to correct the mistakes that were in the previous pieces of legislation.

Many of the things that are now in this bill — not necessarily the specific details of the caps of 10%, 5% and 5%, as the government has set out here, but certainly those pieces are there simply because the government did not

take the advice, not of the opposition parties, because I wouldn't expect them, quite frankly, to take the advice of either our NDP caucus or the Liberal caucus, for that matter, but because the government refused to take the advice of people out there in the field who actually have to implement this piece of legislation and, more significantly, the previous pieces of legislation, as well as the politicians locally, many of whom certainly I would not count as New Democrats, many of whom are small-c conservatives or big-C Conservatives. Yet they told the current government, they told the Mike Harris government that what they were doing with respect to the whole property tax reform was wrong and it was going to cause significant problems.

Small business groups, associations across the province, individual associations — certainly my own local associations whether on St Clair or on Bloor Street West or anywhere in between — have said to this government that their livelihood was being put in jeopardy, their very existence as small businesses was being threatened by the actions that the Mike Harris government took.

Homeowners: How many seniors have I had come into my office and tell me that they are simply not able to pay these increases, and yet this new system does nothing to allow those people to deal with that reality? For them the reality is they either figure out a way to pay it — when I talked to them about the fact that they have an ability to postpone the increase in the taxes, that is something that doesn't mesh with the psyche of many of the seniors in my area, and certainly from what I'm hearing throughout the rest of the city, where people are saying, "No, if it's a bill that I have I don't feel comfortable simply putting that off until the time when the property is sold."

They don't want to leave those debts to their children, so they force themselves to find ways in which they can make those payments, or as some are choosing to do — or having to do, not choosing to do — they are looking at selling their properties. But for those who decided that they are going to make these payments, I know that it's going to cause them hardship. I know that an increase of \$300 a year, which many of them are facing not just for this one year but another \$300 next year and potentially \$100 or \$200 even the year after that, in the kind of way in which the city of Toronto has phased in the increases — and I give the city credit for trying to make the best of a bad situation and trying to put in, at least, this ability to phase in these increases. But I know that those increases of \$300 and upwards for people on fixed incomes, for seniors, are not going to be easy. It's not money that they can easily come by. It means that people are going to have to dip into their savings even more. People are going to have to do with less in order to pay these increases.

That's what the Mike Harris tax system means to people out there. Inside this chamber people can talk all they want about what they're doing to help this group and what they're doing to help that group, but out there, when we find out the real impact of these changes, the story is a very different one. I haven't met too many people who have come to me and said, "I'm really happy with the tax decrease that I've received from the Mike Harris gov-

ernment." I know that there are a few of those, and ironically enough if they're small businesses they are now going to be in a situation where if they've got some decrease they're going to have to pay it back. That just adds to the kind of incredible mess that's been created. My colleague talked about the fiasco and she's absolutely right. That's what's happened. But beyond the incompetence is just the sheer unfairness of this.

People can say: "The property tax system needed to be updated. The assessment system in Toronto particularly was way out of date." Sure, it was. It does need to be updated, there's no denying that. But what I guess I find completely appalling is that if the government of the day had chosen to embark upon a serious reform of the property tax system, then why not make it a serious reform of the property tax system? Why not begin a serious discussion that we need in this province about looking at what services does it make sense to pay for from the property tax system and what services should be paid for through the provincial taxes?

Why the distinction? Because, for example, things like the greatest portion of the costs of education, health care, social services, those kinds of things that have little to do, in fact have nothing to do, with a property ought not, I would argue, be costs that are based on the property taxes, because the property taxes are not based on how much money you make or what ability you have to pay any taxes.

If you have chosen, as many constituents in my riding have chosen to put a lot of their energy and a lot of their savings into buying and maintaining and keeping up their own home, if they've chosen to do that as opposed to invest their money in other ways over the years, those are the people who are being penalized because of the changes. Those are the people who now have to be put in a position where they either add more debt to their house or are forced to make cuts in their livelihood elsewhere in order to meet their property tax bill. That's the problem that's been created with this.

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What about small businesses? We had hundreds, thousands of small businesses across the city, and I know in many other parts of the province, that had to go to the point of rallying, had to go to the point of protesting in the streets before this government even began to listen. Even while that was happening, in the early stages, it took about two months before the government even acknowledged that there was a problem. I found it incredibly appalling that the government that pretends to be the supporter of small business would even put small businesses in that position, where their very existence was threatened.

As happened, as I say, in my own constituency, many of the small shop owners and shopkeepers along St Clair, along Bloor Street, along Dundas, along College Street — these are the people who had invested a lot of their livelihood, a lot of their life-savings into operating a variety of stores — found themselves in a situation where the increases under the scheme in taxes was going to be more than what they were actually bringing in on a

monthly basis or on an annual basis from their businesses in some cases. That's the kind of situation we found ourselves in, and it wasn't just here in Toronto. This is the other incredible thing that we've seen throughout all of this.

When government finally realized they had a political problem to deal with, that they could not afford to see many of these small businesses go under, we then finally had the government back last winter, and in the early spring, come forward with the last version of this bill and say, "OK, we're going to put in place a scheme that allows a cap of the taxes at 2.5% a year for each of the next three years."

Except that in doing so, while they resolved the immediate problem — they gave some relief, because 2.5% a year, 7.5% for three years or 8% or so if you compound it over that period of time, certainly looked at lot better than 50% or 100% increases — it put off the problem for three years, conveniently beyond the next election. It left and still leaves unanswered the question of what will happen at that point for small businesses as well as for homeowners.

It created the further problem that municipalities that chose to opt into that scheme had to put themselves in a position where, if they had to increase taxes because they needed to have a larger budget to provide increased services or to maintain some of those services, again taking into account the cost of the download from the provincial government, the only place they could go to for those increases would be the residential side of the property tax system. So while the small business side was resolved, or dealt with for at least a three-year period, it left the problem there to simply be shifted on to the residential homeowner.

It was no surprise that right across the province — it was only here in the city of Toronto where the problem was the most acute in its first iteration that that was the only municipality that chose to implement that 2.5% cap. Other municipalities still kept saying to the government: "This is still going to cause problems. We're not comfortable going with this 2.5% cap. We're not comfortable that you've given us all the tools," to use a phrase that the government likes to use "to be able to deal with the problem," and the government at that point stopped listening.

The association of clerks and treasurers, the people who actually have to administer this legislation, took the unprecedented steps of coming out publicly. This is an organization that tends to do most of its work, appropriately so, in a quiet way, giving their solid advice to whoever the government of the day is, giving their advice to the politicians locally about what needs to be done and what the implications are if provincial governments or municipalities choose to do certain things. They took the perhaps unheard of steps of coming out publicly, not once, not twice but three times, in letters and eventually in a press conference, lambasting the government because they were not listening to their advice. They were saying to them, "If you proceed with this legislation, it's going to cause chaos out there."

What happened? The government chose, by and large, to ignore that advice; again, not the advice of the opposition politicians, but the advice of the clerks and treasurers, the people who actually have to implement this legislation, the people who are really above, by and large, certainly above all partisanship and are there to try to do the best job they can to implement decisions. They told the government: "Do not proceed in this way because you will cause problems. We cannot manage this. The timelines are too short but, most significantly, what you are doing is going to cause problems out there on the small business side and on the residential side." The government didn't listen and what happened? The chaos evolved. While things subsided in the city of Toronto, we then began to hear problem after problem develop and come to the surface in municipality after municipality outside of Toronto.

We had the occasion only a few weeks ago to talk in this House on a private member's resolution by Mr Christopherson about the situation in Hamilton. We saw examples brought to our attention through the media and through all sorts of other ways from other parts of the province. What was going on in the region of Peel is another example that comes to mind.

You have the situation where the current mayor of Markham, Mr Cousens, a former Conservative member of this place, threatened to lead a march of mayors and other politicians down to this place if the government did not bring in further steps to deal with this problem, if the government did not acknowledge that this was a problem they created and they therefore had a responsibility to fix. It was only at that point that the government began to pay some more attention to this.

I could just imagine what must have been going on in the backrooms of the government where problem after problem kept coming up and politically the government had a real problem, because every time they admitted that there was a problem, it meant they had to do something, and often that meant bringing in another piece of legislation, as has happened here again. That, quite frankly, among other things, shows how incompetent and how unable they have been to deal with this file.

I can understand the hesitation on their part, but yet they were then brought to the point where they had no other choice but to bring forward what is now the seventh piece of legislation dealing with property tax reform. This puts what the government likes to call a further set of tools out there. It provides municipalities now with the option to go back to the 2.5% cap scheme if they want to do that with the concomitant shift of any further increases on to the residential side, or they can now opt into this new scheme that the government is proposing, which is to cap increases at 10% for 1998, 5% for next year and 5% for the subsequent year on businesses, and to keep this essentially within the business category and not have any increases shift over to the residential side.

I have no doubt that some municipalities now will take advantage of this, but I also have no doubt that is not going to resolve the problem because you now have an

added situation, an added problem, in that because we are dealing with this towards the end of November 1998, the government is basically giving municipalities two options with respect to how to make this apply for 1998 because, let's be clear, if municipalities opt for this, one way or the other it's going to have to apply beginning in 1998 because the 10%, 5% and 5% is a cumulative amount that's based on an increase from the 1997 taxes that people were paying and so you have to start applying it on the 1998 taxes.

The government is saying to municipalities: "You can do two things. You can either send out an additional tax bill in the remaining five or six weeks of 1998 or you can readjust it on the first instalment payments in 1999 retroactive to 1998," which I suspect most municipalities will do, as opposed to sending out another tax bill. But even if that's the course of action they take, we are now going to have the added situation where people who receive decreases under the present system are going to have to actually pay some of that back. I don't want to be the municipality that's going to have to deal with that part of the reality as well.

This has been a situation which has just continued to be reflected in problem after problem for this government, and it stems again from the attitude that they had going into this, which we have seen in the health care area, which we have seen in the education area, which is that they just ram on ahead without either realizing or caring about the consequences of their actions and then only after they are brought kicking and screaming to realize that what they are doing is actually hurting people out there do they then try to make some steps to remedy the situation. It's hardly what you'd call a competent government. It's certainly not what you would call a caring government.

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One of the things that I also want to add in the remaining moments on this is what's happening here to the appeal deadlines. I just want to be clear with anybody who may be following this, because I know that many people are still very much interested in what I've been saying on this issue, that the appeal deadline, the deadline to appeal the assessment that one has received, whether that assessment is on the residential or on the commercial or industrial portion of their taxes, now is being extended by this bill to the end of December. I'm glad that's happening.

We brought to the minister's attention way back last year that the deadlines they put in were going to be problematic because we knew, again on the advice of the municipal staff, that the time lines were not going to allow the information to get out in time for people to be able to see whether the assessments were correct. The government again chose to ignore that collective advice and went on and implemented deadlines that fell in the middle of the summer, when nobody knew that they were there. They then had to agree to extend the deadline to the end of October and when they introduced that piece of legislation we weren't able, for a variety of reasons, to get even that through. So I'm glad at least that we have this further extension to December 31. It will give people an oppor-

tunity to again decide whether they wish to appeal the assessments on their properties.

In my office, we have been spending a lot of time helping seniors and others fill out those forms for reconsideration as well as the appeal on their property taxes. I just want to say to people that they still have an opportunity, if they want to do that, to be able to do that before the December 31 deadline. I hope, on that point, that the government and the minister particularly continues to maintain what I gather has been the position to date, which is in light of the hundreds of thousands of appeals that have been launched — and I know the people at the Assessment Review Board are doing their best to try and deal with those, with that incredible workload that's being created for them — that where they're able to deal with those by reconsideration as opposed to allowing them to go to the formal appeal, as I know they're trying to deal with many of those, then even in that case they're prepared to waive the \$20 fee that otherwise people would have to pay for the appeal.

I hope that's a position that continues, and probably has to be carried on beyond the end of December in order to be fair to the people who are trying to process those files as well as to the individuals who are making those appeals.

Let me conclude by saying that this is a bill that for the seventh time tries to fix the property tax system but it tries to fix it in a way that simply compounds the problems that are out there. Giving these tools, while it may help municipalities to fix the problems in the short term, is going to do nothing to address the fundamental issues that I for one believe have to be addressed over some period of time to really get at what services we should be paying for through our property taxes and what services we should not be paying, or otherwise should be paying through the provincial income taxes because they are services that apply across the province, apply to all, and have really nothing to do with property.

That's the real reform that we should engage in. In the meantime, all that the government has done is mess up a system that I will admit was not perfect and was certainly not working in the fairest of ways. But what the government has done is simply compound the problems that were there, create more hardship for people, create an incredibly wrong workload for people at the municipal level, whether they're politicians or whether they are the staff who have to implement those decisions. They have created a situation particularly where many homeowners on fixed income, whether they're seniors or otherwise, and indeed many small businesses, have come face to face with a real inability to pay their taxes.

That is something that people in this place can choose to ignore, they can choose to put to the side, they can choose to pretend is not a real issue out there, but in the area that I represent it's a real issue. It's a real issue because people cannot afford to simply pay more for fewer services, because that's what they're getting. They're not getting more services. People would be happy to pay what more they can and need to if it meant more services, but

what we're talking about here is less in the way of services, more in the way of costs for the people who can least afford to pay those costs.

If we're serious about talking about reforming the property tax system then I hope to God the day comes when we can actually begin a serious discussion of that. This certainly doesn't do it. All this does is simply show how incompetent this government has been, how uncaring this government has been. I hope people will not forget that, come the next election.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments on the dissertation just given by the member for Dovercourt. I need to keep reminding the people in the House about what is possible. What we hear from the opposition members is what isn't possible. The member for Dovercourt said, "Serious reform of the property tax system is needed," and then he goes on to criticize at great length what reform we've brought in.

My community of Chatham-Kent is ample proof of the fact that real change is possible, that real change results in less cost to the taxpayers and an increase in services. Unfortunately there are too many people, supported by the members of the opposition parties, who refuse to get involved in real change. I talked to the mayor of a small separated city the other day and he said, "We looked at amalgamation and eliminating the county, but quite frankly we rejected it."

Interjection: Why?

Mr Carroll: Well, it doesn't make any sense. We all know we have far too much government. In my particular community we went from 156 municipal politicians down to 18. We knocked \$11 million off the tax bill this year for the citizens of Chatham-Kent. So the savings are there. We can find a way to deliver better services to the taxpayers of Ontario. But the opposition parties would sit there and say, "Everything you're doing is wrong because it involves change."

I must caution the member for Dovercourt: Pretty soon we're going to start thinking that maybe he has joined the ranks of the Liberal Party, because he's getting into the flip-flop thing. His leader is going around actively campaigning on increasing taxes. He's been upfront about it. He said, "I'm going to increase taxes if you elect me." Today the member for Dovercourt stands up and with great passion talks about protecting the taxpayers and not increasing their taxes. It's got to be either one or the other, member for Dovercourt. You either believe in increasing taxes or you don't, or we'll call you a Liberal.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Let it just be said to the last member who spoke, we are in favour of change; reasonable, rational, well-thought-out change.

Let's just hear what the Clerks and Treasurers said today in their 14-page memo to you. They say:

"It has been the AMCTO's consistent position not to engage in a debate with the government on matters of policy." In their view, "Policy decisions are the preserve

of elected officials. The AMCTO has always tried, however, to help government achieve its stated policy objectives by providing constructive criticism of its legislative proposals.

"The AMCTO regret that the supportive approach cannot work in the case of Bill 79. In our view, Bill 79 is fundamentally flawed, poorly drafted and will contribute to administrative chaos. It is the AMCTO's position that Bill 79 is beyond redemption and should be withdrawn."

If you don't believe me, how about the member for Halton North? What is he saying was reported in the *Spectator* today? Apparently Halton wants to be exempted from this 10% cap. Do you know what it would mean to Halton? It would mean that about \$9 million too much has been collected, according to the cap, and about 2,000 property owners would have to pay the \$9 million that would have been lost. Most of the shift would be felt by small business. The four chambers of commerce in that area have already agreed that this bill shouldn't apply to them, as well as the four MPPs in that particular area who all happen to be government members. They don't want this bill. Why? Because it doesn't make any sense.

If I have to take the word of anybody on this, I would much rather take the word of the Clerks and Treasurers than the government propaganda that we've been dealing with.

Your bill is flawed and you should withdraw it immediately.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Here we are at bill number 7 and they still don't have it right. The mind boggles.

I have a particular concern, something that's brand-new, that's not even part of that fixup of the previous mistakes, and that's part III, section 38. I'm hoping the member for Dovercourt might respond to that. This is the section that says, "Despite the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, we're going to give the Assessment Review Board the ability to dismiss complaints whether or not a hearing has even been held," and on a whole bunch of grounds like, "Well, we think the complaint's frivolous and vexatious." Who's going to determine that? If you're a property taxpayer and you're real angry and you write a letter that expresses that anger, someone's going to say, "That's frivolous and vexatious," or if there's no legal basis to the claim. Let's say I write a letter and I say I'm appealing this: My taxes are too high compared to other people's. I should have said that my assessment is too high. Legally, if I said my taxes are too high, I don't have legal grounds. Without having a hearing, they can dismiss it.

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There's only one other board or tribunal I'm aware of that has this ability despite the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. That's the Ontario Municipal Board. Now with these cross-appointments, we've got the OMB mentality, that higher level tribunal sinking down into the Assessment Review Board, which is supposed to be a place where ordinary people can come and can get justice,

where you don't have to have the high-priced lawyers and consultants and assessment experts.

This is changing under the Harris government. Joe Smith out there, if you're angry about your assessment, if you know it's higher than a comparable house next door and you don't word it right and you say too many angry words in your letter, you can be dismissed without even getting your day in court. This is nonsense; this is anti-democratic; this has got to be changed.

Mr Baird: I would like to comment briefly on two or three issues, to congratulate the member for Dovercourt on his speech, and to give a man a little bit of credit, the member for Cochrane South, who gave a very good leadoff speech for his party.

With respect to the powers of the Assessment Review Board to dismiss a frivolous case: These are powers, the member for Beaches-Woodbine mentioned, that the Ontario Municipal Board has. I participated as a member of the Agency Reform Commission, which heard from adjudicative agencies right across the province. We dealt with the central agencies themselves and the clients of those agencies in a very non-partisan process. The commission was chaired by the member for Ottawa-Rideau. I think we heard just about universally that there should be the option for that, if it's just simply put to the wrong commission or the wrong board, that they should have the ability — obviously the wrong place or not the right way to go. That's not new; that's done in the OMB right now. It certainly formed a central part of the Agency Reform Commission's report. That was more than six or eight months ago.

I'd really like to discuss a second issue with respect to taxation. I give the member for Dovercourt some credit. His party has come forward with some plans on taxation. But I did want to tell the honourable member for Dovercourt that I was reading in the *National Post* on the 23rd, "Liberal MPs nervous about bucking Harris." It talked about a lot of MPs.

"Veteran Liberal Dennis Mills, MP for the downtown Toronto riding of Broadview-Greenwood said he won't rush out to help his provincial cousins because he likes some of Mr Harris's policies. 'I am a passionate believer in comprehensive tax reform, and some of my tax ideas are not inconsistent with the Harris thought process on tax reform....'" Here you have a Liberal member of Parliament from the part of Toronto that the member for Beaches-Woodbine is privileged to represent saying that his views are not inconsistent with Mike Harris.

Ms Lankin: That's true about Dennis. That's absolutely true.

Mr Baird: "Absolutely true," the member for Beaches-Woodbine says, and I agree.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Dovercourt has two minutes to respond.

Mr Silipo: I want to thank the colleagues who chose to comment on what I had to say or what I didn't have to say. I just want to say to government members particularly: We can play the numbers game a lot around here. I don't know why it automatically sounds good or sounds like it

translates into better service to say there are now fewer municipalities across the province than there were before. Sometimes having fewer doesn't mean that they're actually doing a better job.

I can tell you what I'm seeing here in the city of Toronto. The new megacity council is doing their darndest to try to keep some sense out of this whole craziness that the Mike Harris government has created. But I would not say right now that the citizens in the city of Toronto are getting better government than they had before.

Equally, I can tell you in terms of what's happening on the school board side, that what we are getting is not. That's not because of any efforts of the school boards; that's simply because when you're trying to manage 500 schools and dealing with the reality of 250,000 students, you simply cannot do the job that you have to do, especially when you're not being given the tools to do it. It's not a numbers game here; it's a question of what makes sense.

To my colleague the member for Beaches-Woodbine particularly, let me say that she's absolutely right that this issue of the rights of people to appeal has to continue to be looked at. I believe that in the legislation in front of us there is a provision that says people have to be notified, but I certainly will be interested, when this bill gets to committee, to see what that actually means and to see why they excluded the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. Of course, we know this bill will get to committee, because I forgot to mention earlier that the government did indicate that they have one further amendment to move to this. Despite the fact that this is bill number 7, they still forgot something else, with multi-residential, that they have to deal with by another amendment to the bill, so we'll look forward to those hearings.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I'm pleased to speak this afternoon to second reading of Bill 79, An Act to amend the Assessment Act, Municipal Act, Assessment Review Board Act and Education Act in respect of property taxes. As you are well aware, this bill is intended to protect small business from crippling and unnecessary property tax increases. That is exactly the intent of the bill.

Small business is the backbone of Ontario's economy. All members of this House would agree with that statement, I think. Something like 80% of the new jobs that have been created in recent years in Ontario were in small businesses. Certainly the small business sector merits our support, and we need to do all we can as a government to encourage small business people, small business owners in particular, to create the new jobs we need in this province. With an unemployment rate of still 7% 1, we need to continue to work with small business in particular and large businesses to try to remove the impediments to job creation, which is what this government is endeavouring to do. The sum total of all our policies for the last three and a half years, I would argue, have been an effort to promote job creation.

This bill, as the members opposite have indicated, is part of a number of bills which have been endeavouring to correct the many unfairnesses in the property tax system in Ontario. I think it's fair to point out that a number of previous governments have reviewed this issue, privately or publicly acknowledged that there is a serious problem with property tax in Ontario — there were huge discrepancies, huge inequities — and for whatever reason, whether it be expediency or whatever they would suggest now, decided not to proceed with the reforms that were necessary in order to create the fairness this government is trying to promote. I think the government deserves full marks for at least taking the steps to try to move forward and remove the inequities. I think the member opposite, from Kingston and The Islands, is prepared to acknowledge that, and I'm pleased to hear it.

The survival of many of our small businesses has been threatened as a result of explosive property tax increases. Certainly this bill is designed to cap those increases, 10% the first year and 5% and 5% the following two years. That is why the government has had to move forward with this legislation. The government listened to what small business people told us. The government responded by proposing mandatory measures that, if passed by this House, would provide the protection they need. This protection would provide small businesses with the certainty that they need to make decisions about investing, expanding and creating jobs.

Since we began our mandate, the government has worked to create this positive environment that I alluded to earlier, a positive environment where small businesses can grow, prosper and create new jobs. If passed by the Legislature, Bill 79 will guarantee that no commercial or industrial property taxpayer would face a tax increase related to property tax reform of more than 10% this year and a further 5% next year and the year after that. These proposed limits will apply to the municipal and education portion of property tax on commercial and industrial property in all municipalities across the province, save and except the city of Toronto, which of course used the 2.5% cap for the three-year period. That was one of the tools that was provided for in provincial legislation, and they were quite correct and responsible in doing so, and we were pleased that they were able to take that approach.

When the Minister of Finance introduced Bill 79 and it received first reading earlier this month, on November 5, he said at the standing committee on finance that he would propose amendments that would also protect multi-residential properties under this same formula, which again is something I think most government members would support and certainly I support and understand the need for.

Bill 79 should help to protect residential ratepayers as well, because municipalities will be required to ensure that the limit on tax increases on business properties be funded from within the commercial, industrial and multi-residential property classes.

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Through the passage of Bill 79, any municipal property tax increases beyond the proposed limits would be the

result of decisions made by municipal governments to either increase their own spending, which of course is within their purview to do or, presumably if they felt it was necessary and prudent to do so, perhaps to enhance their reserve funds. But I don't think it's fair for those municipalities, if they feel they have to raise spending or enhance their reserve funds, to blame the tax increases that result from those decisions on the provincial government. It is patently not fair, and I think the members opposite would agree that that's the case.

The only other reasons that property would experience increases above the 10%, 5% and 5% limits are if there are physical changes to the property, such as new construction or renovation; a change in use, such as from commercial to industrial; or a change in vacancy, such as vacant property becoming occupied, all very reasonable assertions, I would submit.

To achieve the 10%, 5% and 5% limits, municipalities, under Bill 79, will still be able to choose from the range of tools available under the Ontario fair assessment system, the tools that the government urged them to use all along. Let me quickly review what these tools are. I think it's important for members opposite to know what these tools are and reflect on those tools. Municipalities may choose from a number of options: a phase-in of reform-related tax increases and decreases over an eight-year period; they may elect to use the option of graduating property tax rates to allow lower tax rates to lower-valued properties; they may adopt any or all of the optional property classes and set different tax rates for each class; they may offer rebates; or they may adopt the 2.5% cap per year, as Toronto did for the years 1998, 1999 and 2000.

If passed by this Legislature, Bill 79 will provide municipalities with yet one more tool which they may consider to use. It's the 10%, 5% and 5% cap, which would cap increases at 10% this year, a further 5% next year and a further 5% the year after that.

All of these tools are optional for municipalities to use as they see fit. Municipalities have had the flexibility to choose a combination of these tools to ensure that moving to the new system was going to be fair to their ratepayers. We have encouraged the municipalities to make use of these tools; however, there are some municipalities in this province that have, for whatever reason, not used these tools to assist their property taxpayers. That's one of the reasons this bill has to come forward. As a result, when municipalities issued their tax bills in August, September and October many businesses faced unmanageable tax increases. Bill 79 will give those municipalities even more time — to the end of this year, December 31, New Year's Eve, 1998 — to choose the tools needed to achieve the 10%, 5% and 5% limits.

I'd like to take a couple of minutes of the House's time to inform the members of the experience that we had in Wellington county with respect to this issue. Over the summer, our county wanted to access some of the tools that the government had employed and, I think quite responsibly so, were doing what they could to try to protect their ratepayers from the immediate impact of

some of these changes so that they could be phased in over time.

What they decided to do was to employ the graduated rate for small business. They took the assessed value of all the business properties, and if the assessed value was \$150,000 or less, it was given preferential treatment in the form of a reduced tax rate, 0.25, I believe, of the overall rate. That gave the small businesses in our municipalities the protections they needed, and they weren't faced with exorbitant tax increases in the main. However, it had the effect of giving a number of the higher-assessed properties, the top maybe 5% or 10%, an exorbitant tax increase. The county recognized that while trying to solve its problem and trying to do the right thing, another problem had been created. They certainly advised me of their concern, and I brought it to the attention of the Treasurer, obviously, to see what could be done. With this new legislation, it appears now that we'll be able to work within the parameters of Bill 79, if it's passed by the Legislature, to effectively solve our problem.

There are perhaps a number of drawbacks to what's going to happen in the next few months, but I'm quite confident that the small business owners in Wellington county will understand the rationale for what is happening and will be responsible and supportive of what the government's trying to do with this bill. If Bill 79 is passed by this Legislature, the government will continue to work with municipalities to ensure that 1998 taxes are adjusted quickly, whether by refunds, supplementary tax notices or adjusting the 1999 interim tax bill. The government is prepared to assist with the cost of doing this.

To provide immediate relief to business, under Bill 79 business property owners who have not paid already billed reform-related tax increases of more than 10% in 1998 would not have to pay interest and penalties on those amounts above 10%.

We recognize that some taxpayers expecting decreases will not get them as quickly as they may have anticipated. However, the government could not stand by idly and allow some small businesses to face property tax increases of up to 600%, which effectively would have put them out of business in very short order. We support small business. We could not stand by idly and allow that to happen. Hence, we have Bill 79.

I wish to conclude by saying that Bill 79 ensures that fair property taxes for small business will be the result and that this bill will play an important part in creating Ontario's positive business climate, which has made Ontario the best place in the world to invest, to create jobs, to raise a family and to live.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Gerretsen: I have a high regard for the member for Wellington but he's got it all wrong. I would once again like to go back to the 14-page submission that was made today to the government by the Clerks and Treasurers, a professional organization that operates in each one of our municipalities, in which they state, amongst other things:

"Bill 79 constitutes a direct intrusion by the government into municipal tax administration." The Clerks and Treasurers "was not supportive of the role assumed by the provincial government in setting an education levy."

I think it ought to be understood by the people of Ontario that about half of your property tax bill is now set by the province — that portion that deals with education. The Minister of Finance can decide behind closed doors what that amount is going to be from year to year. Your local councils have absolutely no say over that at all.

They go on to say the Clerks and Treasurers are "not supportive of the limitations being placed on municipal councils and their decision-making responsibilities under Bill 79."

Let me again remind the members who have just drifted in here of their final conclusion. They say: "The AMCTO" — the Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario — "regrets that the supportive approach cannot work in the case of Bill 79. In our view, Bill 79 is fundamentally flawed, poorly drafted and will contribute to administrative chaos. It is the AMCTO's position" — the Clerks and Treasurers of this province — that it tried to work with this government on this issue for the last two years. They first offered to work with them in February 1997. It is their position "that Bill 79 is beyond redemption and should be withdrawn."

If the people of Ontario don't want to take the word of any of the members in this Legislature, let them at least listen to the professional administration that we have at work for us on a day-to-day basis in the local municipalities. They're saying that this bill is totally flawed. This is not going to help small business. It's going to help, as a matter of fact, big business. Big business tends to gain something like \$300 million as a direct implementation of Bill 79.

I once again ask the government, do the right thing. Do what the Clerks and Treasurers want you to do. Withdraw the bill.

Ms Lankin: I'm glad to have this opportunity to respond directly to the member for Wellington. He's one of my favourite government members, and I always appreciate his participation and appreciate the opportunity to tell him what I thought of that participation.

I want to say to the member it's sometimes hard to keep a straight face. He says that he and the government are listening to small business. Yes, you listen to them when they hit you over the head with the picket signs after they were marching up and down the streets. This is the seventh bill to fix this fiasco. It truly is new, staggering heights of incompetence.

I say to the member for Wellington that you've got these protections in place that you're putting in place with these caps now. We understand that there's going to be some disruption and there are people who are concerned about the administrative nightmare, and there are people concerned about the delay in their decreases as a result, but there are some other people who are really concerned.

Member for Wellington, I specifically want to ask you to respond to this issue because tenants have been saying

to me that they're no longer going to be covered; they're not going to get the same protection as all of these other categories. Those tenants are in multi-residential apartments and here is this bill, which fixes all of the problems that you said still remain — the seventh bill — and tenants aren't going to be protected. Multi-residential units are not included under the caps in this bill.

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Interjection.

Ms Lankin: I'm sorry. Member for Wellington, what was that you said? An amendment? There's an amendment coming to this bill that's fixing all the problems that exist — to the seventh bill? You mean there's a mistake in the bill that's fixing all the other mistakes in all the previous bills and you have to amend it in committee. The minister is going to bring the amendment in committee. So you will fix that problem. I'm glad we're able to bring these issues and the government listened so effectively to us. It's an important exercise in democracy.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Thank you, Speaker, for allowing us to engage in this monologue, as you sometimes think it is, because the other side keeps saying, "Seven bills; withdraw the bill," and some then say, "Adjust the bill." But when we go back and look at the fundamental motivation for changing the system, all we have to do is look at some of the numbers for the old Metro school board on the education costs between 1970 and 1997.

The costs of running the school system in Metropolitan Toronto in 1970 was approximately \$450 million. At that time they had nearly 298,000 students. By 1997, that had dropped down nearly 100,000, yet the costs, including inflation, had gone back up to \$2.25 billion. Cost per pupil 27 years ago was about \$1,100; in 1997, nearly \$7,600. That tells a story right there, without going to any other school board, why we had to make changes in the system. The system was fundamentally flawed, inequitable and unfair, but we have yet to hear from members opposite one solid alternative of a system that they would propose if they don't like the current value assessment system. We don't hear anything. They're silent over there.

Last night I made comments about why not at least push for the locational unit factor-type of approach to assessment. But no, we don't hear anything like that from members opposite; a little bit perhaps from the member for Beaches-Woodbine. It's the first time we've had any enlightenment from across the way, aside from their traditional nitpicking of a system that needed change.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member for Wellington. I wanted to begin by saying that the issues that have been raised not just by the opposition but by the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, municipal politicians and small businesses aren't trivial. They're not minuscule. They constitute what has been a very flawed process that started all the way back with the Who Does What reforms and they have led us now to our seventh piece of legislation dealing with the question of property taxes.

The reforms that the government initially contemplated didn't work. The reforms the government contemplated in its second bill didn't work. The reforms that the government contemplated in its third bill didn't work. The reforms that the government contemplated in its fourth bill didn't work. The reforms that the government contemplated in its fifth bill didn't work. The reforms that the government contemplated in its sixth bill didn't work. The reforms the government is now attempting to bring forward won't work. In fact, the government is again acknowledging today that yet again they have to reform their own bill.

Government members cite their pride having dealt with this tough issue that other parties, other governments, hadn't dealt with, which again is patently false. Other governments have wrestled with these issues in a much more cautious and, I would submit, prudent fashion, recognizing the pitfalls. What this government has done has left a legacy of higher taxes for small business. Regardless of what you say, regardless of the tools, everything you've done has gone contrary. I remember members in Toronto saying they would never support market value assessment, government members — Leach, Bassett, the names go on and on. This bill is fundamentally flawed.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to bring the regrets of my colleague the member for Wellington, who had an important meeting with constituents and was not able to hear the response to the concerns. I know he would particularly want to thank the member —

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Mr Duncan: I am pleased to have the opportunity to join in this debate and review where we have been, what we have done and where the government proposes to go, and add some of my own comments to this debate and what I think it means and what Bill 79 means, both in terms of this bill itself and in the broader context of municipal reform and property tax reform in general.

I recollect, as I'm sure other members of the House do, since this is the seventh time we've dealt with this issue, that the government undertook their Who Does What reforms, which began as and still is a massive reform of our province's property tax system. The reform, as I understood it and I believe the government intended it, was primarily directed to deal with a few municipalities, such as the city of Toronto, which had not updated their property tax base in decades, leading to large tax variations between similar properties.

The government calls the package "current value assessment." That's an interesting term. Having campaigned against market value assessment here in Toronto particularly, I recollect the various members, the now Minister of Municipal Affairs, the now Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation had very strongly stated that they would never support market value assessment. What did they do? They brought in current value assessment and they voted in favour of current value

assessment, which is market value assessment with a different name. I find it particularly ironic that, given the broken promise on an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, here is yet again another broken promise, a very major broken promise to the constituents of the Minister of Citizenship here in Toronto.

In January of this year, it became clear that there were major problems under this new system. I want to start by focusing on the elimination of the business occupancy tax and remind members of the government just what that means. It meant that large businesses, banks, would see 20% reductions in some cases, while small business would see corresponding increases. Additionally, the definitions in the new tax classes resulted in a greater burden being placed on small business property in cities such as Toronto, and I should say not just Toronto.

In my own community of Windsor, when all of this began to unfold and the property tax bills finally hit — I think it was in August of this year that they hit in Windsor. The government mucked up the entire assessment roll system so businesses weren't getting their tax notices until August in my community. All of a sudden, in some of our oldest and most respected neighbourhoods — Erie Street, which is in the heart of my riding, Windsor-Walkerville, or Via Italia, as we call it. It's the heart of the Italian community: a beautifully redeveloped part of our inner city; a vibrant, thriving restaurant/entertainment district that still is the heart and soul of our Italian community. We had businesses on Via Italia/Erie Street getting tax increases in the vicinity, some as high as 200%, small businesses. Of course, they immediately responded. They knew where the blame lay. It didn't lie at city hall.

Our municipal government in Windsor has done a good job in getting the city's debt down. They've worked hard over a number of years to take Windsor from being one of the highest per capita debt municipalities in the province and country down to one of the lowest. It was through a series of tough decisions; it was through a series of planned public policies, and I'm pleased to say that unlike the province of Ontario the city of Windsor's credit rating has consistently improved over the last five or six years. But all of these reforms taken together have left that municipality in a perilous situation.

1700

My predecessor from Windsor-Walkerville, a gentleman by the name of David Croll, was first elected to the Legislature in the 1930s. He got elected because what were then the border cities — Windsor, Walkerville and Sandwich — were facing bankruptcy and it was then that the province of Ontario first started removing some of the higher-priced social service tickets off the property tax base and putting it on to the broader income tax base of the province. Like so many other communities at that time, they were faced with bankruptcy and the government of the day recognized it and began to deal with it.

We have gone in exactly the opposite direction in Ontario today. We have downloaded an additional \$600 million of costs. Municipalities don't know how they're

going to deal with all of this. So in January the business occupancy tax came off, again favouring the banks, favouring large business over small businesses such as those businesses on Erie Street. Then this year's budget: The government promised to spend \$500 million over eight years to help lower education property tax rates in communities where they were significantly above the provincial average, again, most notably in Toronto. This did go some way to reduce the anger of the Toronto business community, but that act in and of itself points to the poor planning of this government, which had been refusing to deal with the problem under its own reforms. It's important to note that the cost of this property tax reduction is offset through expected assessment growth over the next eight years.

This tax reform that we contemplate today was promised to simplify the property tax system. As additional tax bills were brought forward to patch flaws, that system quickly became more complex than the existing one. This is patchwork number seven, the seventh bill, and it's not trivial. It's not enough for members of the government to suggest somehow, "We've been listening and we're changing, we're adjusting." On something as important as this you ought not to invoke or begin the change process until you understand the consequences.

The final note I wanted to raise with respect to the backdrop for all this is that it's now the provincial government that sets the education tax rate for business. That means the Harris government is setting the property tax rate for 55% to 65% of total business property tax. Even though the Premier said in 1997 that he wanted to have total control of education spending to provide equity, the government announced in early 1998 that they had decided to tax business at widely different rates across the province. The chaos and confusion that was created by that announcement is what led to the 1998 budget announcement to spend \$500 million over eight years to lower business property tax rates to the provincial average. This policy reversal, flip-flop, to help business came just months after announcing that local communities were to blame for their own problems.

That is what this is about, isn't it? It's about a government that wants to blame municipalities. It says, "They didn't use the tools available to them." When you discuss that property tax reform and you don't do it in the context of the net \$600-million download to municipalities and the net cost increases that are going to be borne on the property tax base in municipalities, you're not discussing the whole picture.

I'd like to spend a few moments with the specifics so that we have a full appreciation of what we are doing. Under the Harris property tax reform there is a structural shift in tax burden from small to large businesses. This was done deliberately and with planning, and the government indicated it was done in the name of fairness but as tax bills finally went out this summer, it was clear that small businesses across the province were facing huge tax increases, and this bill we are dealing with today is designed somehow to alleviate that.

I want to go back again to my own community and share with members of the government what this means. Where did those taxes go up? They went up in inner cities. I spoke of Via Italia before. One small businessman who owns a restaurant called Spago, and I know some of the government members have been there when they've travelled on committee and enjoyed the great hospitality afforded there and the wonderful ambience and food, said to me: "Dwight, I invested tens of thousands of dollars to upgrade my business, to help rejuvenate a neighbourhood that had become a little bit tired, as did my neighbours. Now, having done this, we find ourselves being penalized for investing in the future of our community." That happened in the Wyandotte Street East business improvement area, the Fordtown business improvement area, the Riverside business improvement area, and the downtown business improvement area. In addition to taxing small business more, this policy, this type of reform helps to undermine the growth and redevelopment of our inner city neighbourhoods.

I find it appalling that the government tries desperately to blame municipalities, alleging that they're profligate spenders, that they're not dealing with the tough issues that confront them. I can't speak for other municipalities, but our municipality prides itself now on its very sound financial management.

What is the government saying to small business? What is the government saying when it says this is fair? The government says that a 20% increase for small business is fair when in fact, because of the elimination of the business occupancy tax, you are letting large employers, large organizations such as the banks off the hook. Compounded by what the government has done in downloading, this has made the past year, I would think, one of the most — "interesting" certainly isn't the word — discombobulating years imaginable for municipal planning purposes.

We've heard again today from the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. I'd like to remind you of what they said before: "This government in its haste is making legislation by the seat of its pants, without proper thought or planning. Yesterday's bill is amended by today's which will likely be amended by tomorrow's." To my colleagues opposite, that's not an opposition member saying that, that's not a rabid tax-and-spend Liberal saying that; that's the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, in my experience a very astute and august body that has represented the interests of our municipalities and the clerks and treasurers of our municipalities in a very distinguished way for many years. But again, isn't this a bit of a pattern that we see, not listening, barrelling ahead?

We've seen today on Bill 55, the apprenticeship bill, that the minister guts his own bill and tries to pretend that it's minor reform, having recognized that the original bill they introduced simply wouldn't work. Even their friends in the corporate community chastized them, saying it's bad legislation. That's what this is about.

The government would have you believe that anybody who doesn't agree with them wants to protect the status

quo, doesn't want to deal with the tough questions, doesn't want to make tough decisions. I would rather make the right decision than the wrong decision, and I would rather make the right decision for the right reasons than make the tough decision for the wrong reasons. That's what this government is about. Under the false guise of change, of reform, of dealing with the tough questions, this government not only has not dealt with the tough questions, they have not brought about property tax reform that can be sustained in the long term.

1710

Again I come back to this notion that we are now on bill number seven. How many times does it take before you get it right? We're apparently going to see another amendment today. We've had a full year of property tax chaos. Municipalities that I've spoken to in the course of the last several weeks say to me they still don't know what to expect in the coming year in terms of their planning processes, in terms of their budgeting processes.

I will predict that the question of property tax increases will be one of this government's Achilles heels. The other two obviously — and I see the Minister of Health here — will be health care and education, two other areas where the government simply doesn't get it. Notionally advocating change to improve the system, not only do they not improve the system, they create chaos in the process.

We look forward to debating property taxes in the next election and we look forward to debating health care issues in the next election. Let me say to the government, we welcome your television ads asking what our position is. We'll let you know what it is in our good time, when we're ready to do that. So you just keep spending all that money — 47 million government dollars into advertising. I spoke to the Minister of Health earlier today about the need to get on with improving the emergency room at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor. We can run multi-million dollar ads at the drop of a hat but we can't somehow free up the money to get that emergency room rebuilt, as everyone agrees it has to be rebuilt.

School closings: I'm quite pleased that last night the trustees of the Windsor board of education did the right thing and voted to keep W.D. Lowe Secondary School open in Windsor for another year — the chaos that again was created by the government in its funding formula, a funding formula I'd like to remind government members of. I'll ask them this question. That funding formula calculates funding based on a square-footage-per-student calculation. I wonder how many government members realize that the only other government agency that calculates funding for large institutions of that nature is the Correctional Service of Canada, the nation's jailer.

That's why when we see this government talking about the need for change, somehow advocating that this property tax reform, their so-called health care reforms, their so-called education reforms are for positive change, they're not. We now have a more regressive, backward property tax system in this province than we've had for years. We have had chaos in the municipal sector now for the better part of two years, ever since the government

decided it was going to reinvent how we do municipal government.

The same in our health care system. The government advocates that we have to close hospitals to reinvest the savings in important other areas. The problem is that the hospitals are being closed and the reinvestments aren't happening. The government will tell us that they're spending more than any other government in history on health care. What they won't tell us is that it's not keeping pace with the cost of health care; it's not keeping pace with growth; it's not keeping pace with an aging population. That's why people across this province know that there are serious problems, despite the government's assurances.

The chaos created in education, through a whole variety of initiatives on the part of this government, led initially to school closures, and now they're going to go back and look at the formula and try to get out of that. It's that kind of chaos, it's that kind of mismanagement that will be an issue in the next general election. I believe that managing change is as important as the change itself. I believe that we have to make changes. We have to be progressive in our changes. This government has failed miserably in managing change. Bill 79 is an admission of that fact.

Ms Martel: I want to reinforce particularly a specific point that the member for Windsor-Walkerville made in his comments here this afternoon, and that has to do with the fact that here we are dealing with this bill, which is the seventh bill in a long line of bills trying to fix the mess this government has made as it has tried to implement property tax reform in this province.

I don't know how the government members could not but be extraordinarily embarrassed by being here today and being put in this position. This government, when it started off on this whole direction, told people in the province that they were going to bring in property tax reform because there was an inherent unfairness in the system, that there were many municipalities and many ratepayers in those municipalities who had not seen a change in tax assessment for some time and were not paying what they probably should be paying if that same house were located in another community where in fact the tax rolls were more up to date.

The government embarked upon this process of trying to implement, in a very hurried fashion, in a limited amount of time, tax reform across the province. The government was warned from the beginning that this is not a direction that you step into or take lightly, that it requires a great deal of work, a great number of people to do the reassessments and that we should be very careful in how we proceed. But the government chose not to listen to anyone, as is the case with this government in issue after issue, and here we are, a number of months later, dealing with the seventh bill to fix the six before, which have all had mistakes too. We find out this afternoon that the government still has to bring forward an amendment to fix the bill that is before us. When will the government learn? This has been so badly bungled. You are completely incompetent on this issue.

Mr Rollins: I don't know if the member for Windsor-Walkerville happens to remember, but other members in the House know that the Honourable Hugh O'Neil is one of my constituents. Hugh was one of the people who phoned me with a very large concern when he got his tax bill, because his tax bill went up some 250% on a restaurant that he and his son had chosen to go into to build for business purposes. This weekend — and it's very hard for Hugh to come up and put his arm around Doug Rollins and say: "Thanks for doing what you've done for me, because I think we would have had to refinance the whole operation if we had left the tax bill the way it was. Thanks for bringing that cap in at 10%, because now at least we don't have to worry about that. We can hold on to it."

I want to say to the member for Windsor-Walkerville that it's very easy to sit there and say, "Well, we'll take lots of time to do something." I'd rather be part of a government that's prepared to do something than just sit there like the last two governments and let us have an \$11-billion-a-year deficit to try to operate. We have asked ourselves to take cutbacks. We've asked this whole operation on this hill to take back money and do a better job, do more for less, and we expect the municipalities to do the same kind of thing, to do a little bit more for a little bit less. In many cases, if they had used all the tools that were in the toolbox in Bill 106, they wouldn't have a problem.

You can always look at Metro Toronto and say, "Yes, I don't want to be like them," but they're a shining star on this bill, because they used the 2.5% cap, and their mayor is very complimentary of how they're looking after business in the city of Toronto. If more municipalities had done the same thing, we wouldn't have had to bring this bill in.

1720

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to make a few comments in respect to the comments made by my colleague from Windsor. Earlier today I had the opportunity to sit in and listen to a group of municipal clerks and treasurers from the province of Ontario. They would agree with my friend from Belleville that changes were needed to the property taxation system in the province. But they were here today to repeat what they have said before, that this bill aggravates the very problem you're trying to fix.

I think we are obligated as a Legislative Assembly to pay particular attention to those specialists whose job it is to make this system work. I repeat, the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario have told us again today that Bill 79, however well intentioned, is a cure worse than the disease it seeks to fix. We'd better listen to that.

I can cite the individuals in my county — as my old friend and colleague from Belleville has cited, Hugh O'Neil, who is happy that there is some capping — yes, let there be mitigation. But the Clerks and Treasurers told us today that they specifically recommended to officials in the Ministry of Finance and municipal affairs other

mitigating measures that would have solved most of the problem without inflicting the kind of pain and misery and dysfunction that Bill 79 is going to impose.

Let me repeat what those Clerks and Treasurers, a lot more knowledgeable than I am about these subjects, told us this morning: "This is going to make a bad situation worse. This is going to spread the problem across into the residential taxpayer next year."

The member from Belleville says no; the specialists say yes. More than that, I am told that officials in the Ministry of Finance and municipal affairs know that this is a problem that is not going to be fixed. It's only pure pre-election politics that has brought us to this point today.

Mr Carroll: It's too bad that all the municipalities in this great province of ours hadn't, in the initial go-around, used the tools that were supplied to them to in fact provide the protection that the taxpayers need. Many municipalities did use the tools. Chatham-Kent was one that did use the tools. When implementing fair market value assessment, implementing restructuring, implementing area rating, we ended up with a tax system that was fair to almost everybody involved because we used the tools.

Unfortunately, many municipalities seemed to think — I'm not sure they even knew the tools existed. As a result, we had to come along, because in many municipalities that didn't use the tools, we had these exorbitant increases in property tax. It's hard to imagine how local councillors, local politicians, could possibly have agreed to passing on those kind of tax increases when they had those tools available to them to make sure that did not have to happen.

We end up with another bill that is designed, put forward, specifically because in many municipalities, not all, the tools provided by the provincial government to make sure that we had a fair system of tax were not used. Consequently we had these huge increases in taxation that weren't necessary, should never have happened. The province was left to come along with another piece of legislation.

I agree with some of the comments opposite. Is it perfect? No, it's not perfect. But it does provide for protection for local taxpayers that was available before, but unfortunately municipal government, through some particular oversight, in many cases decided not to implement.

Mr Duncan: If there has been mismanagement around the issue of property tax reform in this province, the blame rests squarely at the feet of the Mike Harris government. Municipalities have been left in an absolutely untenable position. The know-it-alls across the way will continue to criticize cities; they will continue to criticize anyone who doesn't agree with them. They won't listen to organizations like the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. They will bully through yet another piece of legislation that is fundamentally flawed.

Let me remind government members that this issue is not going to go away because next year it's going to be even more difficult. Next year, those municipalities that have in fact been responsible, that have in fact brought down their costs and have been responsible in terms of

taxation, have been responsible in terms of program management, having foisted upon them a property tax system that doesn't work.

The government can pretend all it wants that it's their fault. The bottom line is you've created bigger problems than you had before. You're leaving a property tax assessment system that will have to be rebuilt yet again, and it will be rebuilt. It will reflect a better and fairer system. Government members can try all they want to put the blame for their own mismanagement and incompetence on to the backs of municipalities across this province. It won't wash. It doesn't wash in this House today. You've got the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers; you've got mayors; you've got municipal councillors in large municipalities and small municipalities saying to you, "It doesn't work." It doesn't work now; it won't work next year. You'll pay the price for this at the polls for what you've done to the property tax system in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Martel: I'm just waiting for the correct time to appear on the clock.

Clerk Assistant: It's 10 minutes.

Ms Martel: We are now down to 10 minutes? OK. Thank you very much. This is another effect of the rule changes.

I want to focus my remarks on Bill 79 in two areas. I want to comment again on the government's complete mismanagement in the whole area of property tax reform. I also want to bring to the House's attention concerns that have been raised very directly and very specifically by the regional municipality of Sudbury, both in a meeting that the new chair of the regional municipality of Sudbury had, along with other chairs, with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Al Leach, several weeks ago, and in terms of a resolution and a number of council debates that have occurred as a result of the finance minister's musing about the changes which would come, and now the bill actually being before regional council.

Let me deal with the first point first. Surely, members of the government, as they sit in their places in this House — those who are here — have to be embarrassed that we find ourselves in a position this afternoon of debating Bill 79, a bill which, in effect, is here before us to fix a mess that came from the sixth bill that was dealing with property tax reform that was before us to fix the fifth bill that was dealing with property tax reform, and so on. We are using up legislative time today with a bill that is here because the government has so badly handled and so badly mismanaged property tax reform that we have had a series of bills to fix the mistakes in the bill before.

We learned as well that not only are we dealing with bill number seven that is before us to fix bill number six, but when this bill goes to committee we will also have to deal with a government amendment, because the Minister of Finance forgot to put in this bill, Bill 79, the fact that he was going to be capping residential units as well. So not only have we dealt with over the past number of months and used up a whole bunch of legislative time dealing with

bills that were meant to fix one after the other, but the government already has had to admit that the bill that is before us today is flawed and will require amendment.

That has nothing to do with the fact that the people who are in the know out in the province — the municipal Clerks and Treasurers who deal with issues like this day in, day out in their municipalities — have come again to this government and said very publicly, as they did today, that this Bill 79 will not work either, that all of the ills it is intended to fix, in a long litany of bills that have plagued the government since they started in this direction, will not be fixed by the proposal the government has before us today. So that will mean, unfortunately, continued confusion, continued chaos, continued trouble in municipalities right across the province, because the government has yet to do this right. The government was in such a big hurry; the government was bound and determined not to listen to people who know about these issues, who deal with them every day. The government was just bound and determined to off-load, to download, to try and redo property tax in the province in such a hurried fashion that we have spent enormous amounts of time trying to fix it, and we are going to be no better off in many municipalities after the passage of this bill than we were when the government started this whole process. In fact, in many municipalities, we're going to be worse off.

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That leads me to my second point. This is a specific case of the regional municipality of Sudbury. The regional municipality of Sudbury is in an interesting position because it was the first in the province to undergo a region-wide reassessment. The region did that in the mid-1980s and since then has been on a four-year reassessment. So the information with respect to the region was updated and in a much better position than were I suspect many municipalities across the province. We have been in the fortunate position that we have not seen the very significant highs and lows with respect to assessment and then with respect to tax bills that many municipalities have seen, especially during this rollercoaster ride we have been on as this government has tried, and proven not to be able to do very effectively at all, to implement tax reform. The region, therefore, had good information and had an up-to-date assessment base. We were probably most fortunate with respect to many other municipalities.

What has happened now is, with respect to this particular bill that we are dealing with here today, any number of people who have commercial properties, who have industrial properties, who were going to receive a tax decrease because our rolls are up to date, are now going to be in a position where that decrease is entirely wiped out because they are now going to be in a position to pay for the cap which this government wants to impose on those same classes of industrial and commercial property. In fact, a whole number who would have had a decrease are going to be affected, probably more than those who will now find the cap placed on the increases they would have had to pay for.

The regional municipality of Sudbury is quite concerned about this because they were in a position to have good information, to have up-to-date assessments. They did use any number of the tools that the government put before them. They have tried to manage the very turbulent change that we have seen in the last three years as the government moved to try and reform, allegedly reform, the tax system in the province. They have done everything they have been asked to do and now they are in a position of having to go back to any number of people who would have got a rebate and telling them: "We're going to claw it all back. We have to claw it all back now because we have to deal with the cap that the province has imposed because of the problems we have in any number of other municipalities."

They put a resolution forward to this government because their concerns result in a number of problems. They believe that it will destroy entirely the credibility of the new property assessment system. The legislation before us does not allow for any kind of local solution to local problems; in fact, it just puts forward a broad brush that sweeps across our whole province and everyone is caught in the same way. It could result potentially in major payment-in-lieu revenue losses to municipalities that will result in major tax increases for other property owners. It will anger those taxpayers who have already received their tax decreases if a phase-in is imposed and these decreases are clawed back. If the tax rebates are given instead, then tax rates will have to be increased to pay for those rebates, thus increasing taxes for those who have already been given a decrease. It will delay the 1998 appeal deadline, which will result in delays in the delivery of the 1999 rolls and that will have a negative impact on municipal cash flows, resulting in increased interest expense. It will be some time before municipalities are even able to work out adequately the details because much of the information in the assessment data provided by the province to many municipalities is so flawed and has to be corrected.

That is why regional council, and the regional chair in particular, came to Toronto some weeks ago to try and lobby the Minister of Municipal Affairs to make clear what the problem is, particularly in two-tiered municipalities, which is the situation we are in, and particularly with respect to a community that had up-to-date assessment data.

The changes that we will see across the region are as follows: Property reform increases above 10% are worth about \$2.8 million, or 58.5% of the decreases of \$4.9 million. If only those properties experiencing decreases were required to fund the increases above 10%, then 58.5% of all decreases will have to be clawed back. The city of Sudbury will be required to fund the cap in all other municipalities, as it is the only municipality where the proportionate decreases of 58.5% exceed the increases. There are 1,300 properties that have increases above 10%, 824 that have decreases. In the industrial class you see the same type of gap: increases that are worth above 10%, about \$1.6 million or 69% of the decreases worth about

\$2.4 million. All of the changes in that case are going to be absorbed by the city of Sudbury and the town of Onaping Falls because they are the only municipalities where the decreases of 59% exceed the increases.

In Sudbury we will see about 1,000 commercial-industrial properties that are affected. About half of those are going to lose their anticipated tax break. It also means that the local councillors are going to have to go back, rework budgets that were settled on months ago and send out a second property tax bill. They believe, frankly, the province should pay for all of the problems that have been caused here to date. They have specifically recommended that it should be the province that deals with all of the costs above the cap versus having to go back and take money from people who had decreases and the —

The Acting Speaker (Mr W. Leo Jordan): Member for Sudbury East, time has elapsed. Further comments or debate?

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to my colleague from Sudbury East. She certainly spoke at great length about this whole issue of property tax reform. One might have the view that everything with respect to our property taxation system was perfect before this government was elected. There were certainly substantial inequities and this government is seeking to tackle what is an extremely tough issue. I suppose, politically, it would have been the easier thing to just sit back and do nothing. But to make an earnest attempt to move forward in the right direction, to bring greater fairness and equity to our property tax system, that's certainly the attempt of this government's policy in that area.

I would compliment her and her party. At least they have a taxation agenda. She spoke at great length about wanting to go back to people who are expecting a decrease and now they're going to tell them they're going to get whacked.

I suspect that's just like the NDP's income tax policy. The New Democratic Party wants to go back and increase taxes of hard-working men and women. Where did they choose the threshold to take the Mike Harris income tax cut back? Exactly within 2% of what MPPs make, right at \$80,000 a year. So MPPs would be able to keep their tax cut, but anyone making more than MPPs wouldn't get their tax back. I wondered how they came up with the number. I looked at the number and I noticed that it was remarkably similar and it's quite interesting.

I know the member would agree with me. She noted the quote from Dennis Mills, the Liberal MP, when he said, "I am a passionate believer in comprehensive tax reform and some of my ideas are not inconsistent with the Harris government." Most interesting.

Mr Gerretsen: I would just refer once again to the 14-page document that the association of clerks and treasurers came up with today. This is the professional civil service that works in each one of our municipalities. One of the interesting comments they make in that document is that with this bill, in effect, there will be no market value assessment. I don't know where that leaves us but even if you were to take the government's view that this is doing

that, the Clerks and Treasurers don't agree with you on that.

It's also interesting to note that in the *Spectator*, in an article dated today, November 25, 1998, Halton has asked for an exemption, including the four chambers of commerce that represent Halton, including the four MPPs, all government MPPs from Halton, who somehow don't want Halton to be involved in this legislation, they want it to be exempted. You know why? I'll tell you why. The 10% cap means that Halton would have to collect about \$9 million from about 2,000 properties that had seen their taxes decrease this year. Most of that shift will be felt by small businesses.

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I think that people have to understand that if you are in a business category whereby you're going to benefit from the 10% increase, that money that's going to be lost is going to have to be made up among the same businesses that got a decrease. So here you're hurting the businesses in your own municipality that feel they've finally got some equity, their tax bill is lower and now you're forcing the municipalities, in effect, to send out another tax bill this year in which they'll have to say: "I'm sorry. Remember that bill that you got and which was much lower than last year? We'll have to increase it again because of this new legislation."

Here is a municipality that doesn't want it, there are four influential government members that don't want it, and what does the minister do? He just plows right ahead against the recommendations of just about everybody who knows anything about this bill.

Mr Silipo: I'm glad to comment on the presentation made by my colleague and friend the member for Sudbury East, who always comes to these debates not only well prepared, but armed with a lot of very useful information. She talked a fair amount, and would have talked more had she been allowed to under the rules, about the situation in her own area of Sudbury, which she has certainly been talking with me about as we have been talking about this bill and the impact it will have across the province.

As she pointed out, one of the problems that comes now as a result of the government not having listened earlier to the mess that it was creating out there, with this change upon change upon change and not even knowing what each change meant until well after they were put in place and then having to come back and fix the problems that they created, is that now you have a situation where there are going to be problems even in dealing with rolling back the decreases that some people did receive, whether they were on the commercial side or in the industrial classes.

As she pointed out, in the Sudbury area, 50% of all decreases would have to be clawed back in the commercial class and 69% of all decreases would have to be clawed back in the industrial class. It sets off in that particular part of the province a dynamic which I don't want to see anywhere in the province, where you have one municipality, in that case the inner municipality, being pitted against the surrounding municipalities because of the regional nature of government there and the fact that the assessment is applied across the whole region.

This is again just a very clear example of the kinds of problems that the Mike Harris government has created for property taxpayers and for municipalities right across the province, which my colleague from Sudbury East outlined very well as it applies directly to the Sudbury region, and it's one more reason why what this government is doing is completely wrong, completely incompetent and completely insensitive to the real needs of property taxpayers across the province.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Chatham-Kent.

Mr Carroll: I'm in the speaking rotation.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Hastings: I think the thing we need to keep focusing on is the fundamental rationale for changes to the property assessment system. What we need to look at is the context in which that fundamental change needed to be brought about. Not only are we dealing with responses to problems that we're dealing with today, but also an accumulation or a legacy of neglect that should have been dealt with many years ago. Then we wouldn't be dealing with one, two or seven bills.

If we look at the record of the two parties opposite, what progress did they ever make in fundamentally changing the system of property assessment in this province? What specific progress did the members of the official opposition make between 1985 and 1990? The only thing I can remember is their great introduction of a land concentration tax. The commercial concentration tax really was an effective addendum to the whole method of taxing people in this province. What did it do? It had the great effort of killing jobs in our own community of west Toronto. It put a tax — can you imagine? — on parking lots attached to hospitals, attached to hotels. It really helped a lot of job creation. That's the only tinkering they did.

The other party at least got started, but then they got sandbagged along the way. Around November 29, the last Saturday of November 1993, is when I recall was their last gasp at trying to get some reform of the property assessment system in this province. What happened? They failed. Now we pick up the ball and are doing something about it, fundamentally positive.

Ms Martel: In response to some of the comments that have been made, let me say to the member for Nepean, who talked about the reversal of the tax scheme and how he felt that MPPs might not be included in this, I can say to you categorically here today that if you manage to get re-elected, we will guarantee that you will be included in the reversal of the tax scheme and we will ensure that the benefit that you've seen as an MPP under the Mike Harris tax scheme will go to the greater good, to make sure that hospitals and the education system in this province continue to be publicly funded and continue to be adequately supported.

The point I want to make about what is before us is that here is a community, namely, the regional municipality of Sudbury, that for many long years now has been doing things right. They were the first region in this province to actually undergo a region-wide reassessment so that they

would have a relatively up-to-date assessment base, yet this same municipality that took those steps a decade ago also finds itself in a position of now being worse off under the so-called reform in property tax that this government has gone through over the last number of months; they are worse off than they were before. So your scheme all through the seven bills, including the one we are dealing with today, has not helped them, and as we stand here today, your scheme presented in the bill that is before us is going to make the situation worse.

We are going to see far more people who would have got, in the industrial and commercial classes, some kind of tax relief actually having that relief clawed back to deal with those people who are above a 10% cap. Far more people are going to lose money than the group that this bill is supposed to protect or alleges to protect.

So I just say it's about time the government steps back. Would you listen to the people who know what's going on for a change and try to do this right for a change?

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Carroll: I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments here just before the dinner hour arrives. I'd like to start off my comments on Bill 79 by quoting David Crombie. All of us in this House have come over the years to respect Mr Crombie for some of the things he does; not necessarily for all of them, but for some of the things that he does. He was quoted in the *Toronto Star*, that bastion of conservatism, back in 1997 as saying: "The province took over assessment...in 1970 to fix it up and give it back to the municipalities. They've still got it, 27 years later, and it ain't fixed because governments backed away from the consequences."

That is so true. The assessment system in our province has been sorely in need of reform for many, many years, and every government prior to ours backed away from the task of reforming it because of the consequences. We are now, of course, dealing with some of those consequences, because it is an enormous task that needed to be done, and with the courage of our government we took it on to do it.

It's interesting to hear the opposition parties be so critical of our efforts in that regard. When they had their kick at the cat, they chose to just ignore it.

I'd like to speak for a few minutes about our particular government and its legacy. Obviously with Mike Harris's moniker of the Taxfighter, our government is known as a government that believes we have too much government, we have too much tax, and we are committed to reducing both of those areas. As you know, Mr Speaker, since we've been elected, we have reduced taxes in the province on 66 different occasions. We've honoured our commitment to reduce personal income tax. We've honoured our commitment to reduce employer health tax. We believe fundamentally that our province is overgoverned and over-taxed, and we are doing what we can to solve that problem.

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There are some municipalities that have picked up on the lead that is being taken by our provincial government, and they too are dealing with these issues of over-

governance and overtaxation. At the risk of being repetitive, I would again like to bring attention to my municipality of Chatham-Kent; I'd like to talk about our mayor, Bill Erickson, the chair of our budget committee, Doug Sulman, and our city manager, Hugh Thomas. I'd like to compliment them for embracing change, for coming to grips with the fact that in our municipality of 100,000 people, we had more politicians than the whole province of Ontario has in Ottawa. It did not make any sense that our small area of Chatham-Kent needed 156 political positions to govern itself.

Our community came to grips with that. They took the lead of our provincial government and said, "It is time, on behalf of the taxpayers, to make some changes to reduce the level of government, to reduce the burden of taxation on the people of Ontario," and we went ahead on that. I take my hat off to these gentlemen, because they embraced the change.

The other thing they did, when confronted with the challenge of fair market value assessment, when confronted with the challenge of a restructured municipality and the challenge of area rating as far as services go, was they took a look at the package of tools given to them by the province and said, "How can we use these tools to mitigate the impact of all these changes on the taxpayers?" So over and above the fact that we found \$11 million in savings at our municipality as a result of restructuring, savings that are directly refunded back to the taxpayers — they are the people who pay the bills; they are the people who receive the services, and they're tired to death of the bills we've been handing to them. We did it — I shouldn't say "we" did it, because in actual fact it was the people in our municipality who did a great job making sure we maintained the level of service, reduced the taxation, and they did it because they embraced change.

The Liberal position is always so interesting. They stand in the House and say, "Yes, we need change." Then, as soon as they have acknowledged the fact that we need change, they say, "But not your kind of change." Our friends in the New Democratic Party — I admire so much the fact that they take positions. They say: "Here is what we believe in. Here is what we would do if we were re-elected: We would raise taxes." We've been through five years of their government. It was rejected by the people of Ontario. But we know what they believe in. They have positions. They're passionate in their positions, and I admire them for that. The official opposition across the road — we have no idea where they stand. As I've so often said in this House, a Liberal position politically is an oxymoron; they don't have any. They talk about the need for change, and then they oppose every kind of change that comes in.

I'd like to quote Judith Andrew, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This is a comment she made on October 24 relative to Bill 79, that we're talking about tonight. She said:

"The business community welcomed the province's intervention.... The municipalities should have used the tools. They should have done something to protect their

small business clientele, and frankly, this provincial override is very, very important."

What we have is a situation where the province of Ontario said: "The change to the assessment system that we currently have is long overdue. We're going to put in that change. We're going to give the municipalities the tools they need to make sure change is made in an orderly and a fair way." Many municipalities, mine included, said: "OK, we're with you on this one. We understand the need for change. We appreciate the tools. Thank you very much." They used the tools. In my riding, Navistar, one of our largest employers, that produces those wonderful international trucks we see going up and down the highway — just as a little aside, we'd all be happy to know that currently Navistar is sitting with an order bank of 24,000 of those heavy-duty trucks, absolutely a fabulous situation.

Small retailers: Bill Rossini at Rossini's Restaurant, my personal favourite restaurant in Chatham-Kent —

Ms Lankin: Jack, you're being reported.

Mr Carroll: One of the opposition members is up in the press gallery cribbing my notes here. He's obviously turned on to the press. He gets an opportunity to speak on every issue that's in here, and now he wants to report on all of them besides.

Eddie Mariconda of Boyes and Herd, the local haberdasher in town that I buy my clothes from — all these people have embraced the change. They appreciate what our government has done on their behalf. Wouldn't it have been so nice if all the municipalities — and Toronto did a great job. The politicians in Toronto said, "We have to protect our small businesses," and they came up with a plan to do that.

To sum this whole thing up, we set out as a government with an incredible amount of courage to change a system that everybody admitted was sorely in need of reform and

that previous governments did not have the courage to deal with. We said we would deal with that and we brought forward Bill 106, I believe it was initially, to lay the groundwork for that. Was Bill 106 perfect? Absolutely not. We were dealing with an incredibly complex issue. But instead of hiding our head in the sand and saying, "No, we were right the first time out, we don't need to make any changes," we listened to the feedback that we got and we subsequently made additional changes so that the taxpayers of our great province would be the beneficiaries.

When we got to the final piece of legislation, we thought the municipalities would use the tools. Unfortunately, they didn't all use the tools. I think in some cases the local councillors weren't even aware that the tools existed, but they were there and they didn't get used. We've now said, "We're going to give you one last opportunity on behalf of your taxpayers" — and your taxpayers are the same as our taxpayers, Mr Speaker — "to do the right thing and make sure that the taxpayers of this great province pay less tax."

When I hear about tax increases like Haldimand-Norfolk's, a 17% tax increase, that's absolutely unconscionable, and I support what the member for Norfolk is doing in his private member's bill tomorrow. I'm sure the opposition members who are now very interested in reducing taxes will also support that.

It would be nice if we hadn't needed to do this particular piece of legislation but we did, because the municipalities didn't use the tools we gave them. Hopefully this will be the end of reform of the tax system.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Brant-Haldimand	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Petit, Trevor (PC)
Brantford	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Bruce	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Soins de longue durée, ministre délégué aux affaires des personnes âgées	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Cambridge	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Carleton	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
	Wood, Len (ND)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Cleary, John C. (L)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
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Cornwall	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
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Dovercourt	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Lincoln	Shechan, Frank (PC)
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Durham West / -Ouest	North, Peter (Ind)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
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Elgin	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Essex-Kent	Hastings, John (PC)		
Essex South / -Sud	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	McLeod, Lyn (L)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Marchese, Rosario (ND)		
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)		
Etobicoke West / -Ouest			
Fort William			
Fort York			
Frontenac-Addington			

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Sault Ste Marie /	
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Nickel Belt	Morin, Blain K. (NDP)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Norfolk	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Northumberland	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Oakville South / -Sud	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oakwood	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oriole	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Oshawa	Patten, Richard (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)		
Ottawa East / -Est	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Rideau	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa South / -Sud	Cullen, Alex (ND)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		
Oxford	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Parkdale	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Parry Sound	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Perth	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Peterborough		Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Port Arthur			
Prescott and Russell /		Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Prescott et Russell		Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prince Edward-Lennox-		Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
South Hastings /		Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox-		York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)		
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	York Mills	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
	Conway, Sean G. (L)		
Renfrew North / -Nord	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
Riverdale		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
S-D-G & East Grenville /	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs		
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bradley, James J. (L)		
St Catharines	Froese, Tom (PC)		
St Catharines-Brock	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		
St George-St David			

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 25 November 1998

Mercredi 25 novembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Wednesday 25 November 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 novembre 1998

The House met at 1832.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREATER TORONTO SERVICES BOARD ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA COMMISSION DES SERVICES DU GRAND TORONTO

Mr Leach moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to establish the Greater Toronto Services Board and the Greater Toronto Transit Authority and to amend the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority Act / Projet de loi 56, Loi visant à créer la Commission des services du grand Toronto et la Régie des Transports en commun du grand Toronto et à modifier la Loi sur la Régie des transports en commun de la région de Toronto.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm very pleased to move second reading of Bill 56, the Greater Toronto Services Board Act. The members will recall that this act, introduced in June, would, if passed by the Legislature, create a Greater Toronto Services Board, and our goal is to have that board up and running by January 1, 1999.

Just at this point I would like to indicate that I'm going to share my time this evening with the member for Mississauga West and the member for Perth, who I recognize.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum. Can you please check?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Yes, I will. Would you check and see if there's a quorum present.

Acting Clerk at the Table (Ms Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Acting Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon Mr Leach: As I was saying, the members will recall that this act, introduced in June, would, if passed by the Legislature, create the Greater Toronto Services Board, and our goal is to have it up and running by January 1, 1999.

The purpose of this new board would be to promote better co-operation and integration of municipal services within the greater Toronto area. This would lead to better service delivery at lower cost to taxpayers.

The legislation would enable the board to prepare strategies on how GTA municipalities provide the sewer and water pipes, the roads and transportation systems their communities need, and how to make sure they are efficiently used. The board would manage GO Transit through an authority that would be called GT Transit. It would help coordinate economic development and tourism in the GTA. It would help resolve disputes among GTA municipalities. It would be a forum for municipalities to discuss the administration and costs of social assistance and social housing programs within the greater Toronto area.

There are 29 municipal government in the GTA, each planning for its future, each providing various types of infrastructure, each delivering services. This board is not intended to change that. It is intended to allow those activities to be coordinated so they can happen as efficiently as possible, so GTA municipalities can work with each other rather than at cross-purposes as sometimes happens at the present time.

As a matter of fact, one only has to look at the dispute between the cities of Toronto and Mississauga on the issue of public transit. There clearly is a need to have the municipalities of the GTA work together, a need that has been discussed, that has been researched and that has been consulted on. Both Anne Golden, who was appointed by the former government, and David Crombie studied municipal government in the GTA. Their reports, Golden in 1995, and Crombie in 1996, came to the same conclusion: a lack of coordination is hurting the economic competitiveness of the region and, by extension, the whole province.

In 1997, Milt Farrow consulted further and proposed principles for the establishment of the Greater Toronto Services Board. Alan Tonks went further still, talking to municipal officials about the nuts and bolts, as set out in draft legislation released in March of this year. I would like to take a minute to thank all of these people. This bill was shaped by their discussions. It represents what we believe to be a workable compromise.

Mr Tonks has continued to talk with municipal councillors across the GTA. He has worked to clarify the purpose and substance of the bill for them. He has listened to their concerns, their reservations and their recognition of the need for greater coordination in the greater Toronto area.

I'd like to talk for a few minutes now about what is in the bill. The legislation calls for a Greater Toronto Services Board with 40 members. That would include at least one member from each municipality in the greater Toronto area, plus a chair, plus one member from Hamilton-Wentworth appointed only for the purposes of GO Transit. The proposed membership of the Greater Toronto Services Board respects the important principle of geographic inclusiveness. Smaller municipalities told us they wanted a seat at the table; perfectly understandable. We've listened and we've responded.

The chair would be elected by the Greater Toronto Services Board members. He or she would not be a member of any municipal council within the regional transit area, which of course includes all the greater Toronto area municipalities and Hamilton-Wentworth. All GTA regional chairs and mayors and the regional chair of Hamilton-Wentworth would be members. The city of Toronto would have 10 additional members, and the city of Mississauga would have one additional member who is also a member of Peel regional council. The additional members would be appointed by their municipal councils.

After each national census, the Greater Toronto Services Board would be required to review the composition of the board to reflect the population changes in the greater Toronto area. But each municipality in the greater Toronto area would continue to have at least one member.

1840

A quorum for matters other than GO Transit would have to include a majority of members entitled to vote on any issue, that is to say, at least 21 of the 40 members. A quorum would also have to include at least one member from a majority of the participating regions — one member from within the geographic areas of at least three of Durham, Halton, Peel, Toronto and York.

A quorum for GO Transit matters would include a majority of the members entitled to vote — again, at least 21 of the 40 — and it would also have to include at least one member from within the geographic area of four of the affected regions: Durham, Halton, Peel, Toronto, York and Hamilton-Wentworth.

All GTSB members would have at least one vote. Votes would be weighted to achieve representation by population on a regional basis.

Let me speak for a moment about what the proposed board would do. The board would promote coordination of decision-making among the municipalities of the greater Toronto area. It could, for example, encourage them to coordinate transportation and transit decisions to make it easier for people to take public transit across municipal boundaries or to improve the flow of traffic on major roads.

It would exercise general direction and control over the Greater Toronto Transit Authority, approve the authority's budget and allocate the costs of Greater Toronto Transit and the borrowing to meet the capital requirements of GT Transit.

While GTA municipalities would continue to be responsible for all their own services functions, the GTSB could have a number of additional roles, including acting as the liaison among municipalities and other levels of government; helping to resolve matters of inter-municipal concern within its mandate when asked to do so by an affected municipality; facilitating resolution of matters outside its mandate on a request from a member municipality and with a majority vote of the GTSB. It could also provide for the coordination of economic development and tourism within the greater Toronto area, which is important to us all. It would also promote and coordinate decision-making among and develop advisory strategies for municipalities within the GTA with respect to the administration and the costs of social assistance and social housing.

The GTSB may also prepare strategies with respect to providing and efficiently using infrastructure. Adoption would require a two-thirds majority vote to ensure that the decision is supported by a broad consensus among the GTSB members. Municipalities would then determine whether to implement a GTSB strategy when planning for municipal infrastructure requirements. For example, a GTSB strategy that dealt with solid waste management could not mandate the use or location of existing or new landfill sites.

The GTSB would be able to levy, to cover its own operating costs against the city of Toronto and the regional municipalities of Halton, Peel, York and Durham. For GO Transit purposes, it could also levy against the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth.

The GTSB would be required, prior to December 1, 2000, to review its size and its composition and the number of votes assigned to members, its powers and its boundaries. It would report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on or after January 1, 2001. The review may consider redefining boundaries to enable a municipality to opt out of the GTSB, but it could not consider expanding the current GTSB boundaries.

As I mentioned earlier, the legislation would also establish a Greater Toronto Transit Authority, GT Transit, as a corporation without share capital. GT Transit's responsibility would include the operation of GO Transit rail and bus services.

GT Transit has four objectives as proposed in the legislation: It would be responsible for the operation of a regional transit system, currently known as GO Transit, serving the regional transit area and other municipalities by agreement. It could be responsible for the operation of local transit systems within the regional transit area. This could only occur with the agreement of the GTSB and the municipalities which each local transit system is operating. It would exchange information on the operation and design matters and integrate services with the other transit systems.

I know Mr Baird from Ottawa is greatly interested in this subject and I know he's going to pay very close attention.

Until 2000, members of GT Transit would include a chair appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the mayor of Toronto and the chairs of Durham, Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth, Peel and York regions. These are the members of the current Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority, which now operates GO Transit, and should ensure a smooth transition.

I'm very pleased to see that the member from Scarborough and the member from Kingston are paying very close attention, because it is an extremely important subject. I'm glad to see their interest.

After the year 2000, GT Transit would consist of six members who are also members of the Greater Toronto Services Board, plus a chair. One member would be appointed by Toronto council, one member by each of the regions of Durham, Halton, Peel and York, and one would be the chair of the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth. If one of these members is chosen to chair the transit authority, the municipality that appointed the member to be chair would appoint another one of its members as its then GT Transit member. Each member of GT Transit would have one vote. The chair would only vote to break a tie.

GT Transit would be subject to the general direction and control of the GTSB. Subject to this direction, GT Transit would have the power to undertake the objectives set out above. Powers would be very similar to those currently provided to the GO Transit board. For example, it could acquire and sell land, acquire transit vehicles and equipment, operate parking lots and enter into agreements in connection with the operation of a regional transit system.

GT Transit would employ a managing director and other employees it needs to carry out its mandate. The GTSB would be able to impose two levies against member municipalities for GT Transit purposes, one to cover the cost of running the system over and above what it receives in fares, and the second to cover GT Transit capital borrowing costs.

In my discussions with the municipalities, I've heard both praise for and concerns about the legislation, and so has Mr Tonks in his visits with the municipalities. Let me take a couple of minutes to address the concerns that we've heard.

One is that the proposed board does not give a strong enough voice to rural communities. We made several changes to address that concern when we introduced the bill before us in June.

First, we ensured that all municipalities in the greater Toronto area would be represented on the GTSB. Rural municipalities would now have 11 of the 40 seats at the table. With weighted voting, those 11 members, representing 7% of the population, will wield 10% of the votes. Furthermore, this bill permits municipalities to send alternates to GTSB meetings. That should make it easier, particularly for municipalities that only have one representative, to make sure they don't miss any meetings.

The bill contains new quorum requirements, along with a new requirement that certain important GTSB decisions

must receive a two-thirds majority vote to pass. A broad consensus would be needed on these matters, and a single jurisdiction would not be able to control the agendas.

1850

Several rural municipalities asked for a mandatory review of the board's jurisdiction within three years. The legislation now requires the board to review its size, to review its composition, to review its voting distribution and powers and area of jurisdiction by the end of its second full year.

I would like to emphasize that the Greater Toronto Services Board would provide a new forum for all municipalities in the GTA, urban and rural, to discuss their intermunicipal concerns. It would give rural municipalities a forum in which to work together on issues of concern to them, and a chance to bring their unique concerns to the attention of other greater Toronto area municipalities. I've told the rural representatives that I continue to take their concerns very seriously and that their voices will be heard, and I'll be looking forward to hearing what they and others have to say during this legislative process.

Another concern we've heard is that the bill goes too far, that it would impose a third level of municipal government on the greater Toronto area. Well, the Greater Toronto Services Board will not be another level of government. It has no service delivery responsibilities other than overseeing the operation of GO Transit, and it has no direct taxing authority. It will simply encourage and promote better coordination and co-operation among GTA municipalities.

At the same time, other people have told us that the bill doesn't go far enough, that it doesn't give the board enough power to get done some of the things that really need to be done. To these people, I say that the bill is a compromise made in the interest of moving forward. As I said earlier, virtually everyone who has looked at the greater Toronto area agrees on one thing: Better co-ordination and co-operation is needed. I think the important thing is to get on with it.

We need to walk before we can run. I fully expect that the Greater Toronto Services Board will evolve in the future. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, the legislation requires the board, before the end of the year 2000, to undertake a full review of its size, of its composition, of the number of votes assigned to members, its powers and its boundaries. So ultimately, the member municipalities of the greater Toronto area will decide on how the GTSB should work and what it should do.

I've also heard from some people that this legislation favours Toronto. Others say it favours the outlying areas, the 905. Those who say it favours Toronto point to the fact that Toronto has half the votes, that nothing can happen if Toronto opposes it. To them I would respond that Toronto does have half the population of the GTA and that we generally operate on a system of representation by population.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere):
Makes sense to me.

Hon Mr Leach: Furthermore, the city of Toronto is in the heart of the GTA, and therefore we believe it is important to ensure that the central urban core remains strong and vital.

The member from Scarborough says that makes sense to her, and I have a great deal of faith in the judgment of the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere. I'd just like to mention that.

Just the same, every municipality in the GTA, both upper and lower tier, will have at least one member on the board with at least one vote. This means that every municipality will have a voice on the board and an opportunity to put forward its views and to participate in board discussions prior to the board voting. As I mentioned earlier, the quorum requirements — you need a two thirds majority, as I mentioned — would prevent Toronto or any single municipality from dominating the proceedings. As well, a number of decisions — the adoption of infrastructure coordination strategies, for example, or the allocation of the costs of GO Transit — would require a two thirds vote of the members present at any meeting.

I would also like to point out, as I said earlier, that the Greater Toronto Services Board representation model is not set in stone. When the GTA's population grows and shifts, the representation will change as well.

There are those who say it favours the outlying regions, that it favours the 905. They like to point out that Toronto has to pay half the cost of GO Transit, the only service the GTSB will be responsible for delivering and paying for, yet Toronto only has one vote on the GO Transit board, the same as Durham, the same as Halton, the same as Hamilton-Wentworth, Peel and York. But as I just mentioned, Toronto has half the votes on the Greater Toronto Services Board, which holds the purse-strings for GO Transit.

This bill is not necessarily in its final form. We have been listening to all of the stakeholders who provide input into this bill. If people have workable ideas of how we can improve this bill, we will continue to listen, as we always do. Mr Tonks is continuing to talk with the people around the GTA, and the legislative process that we are going through at the present time will provide yet another opportunity for input. I'll say again that not everyone agrees on exactly how government services and infrastructure should be coordinated across the greater Toronto area, but pretty well everyone agrees that it should happen, and it should happen now.

Last spring, the Markham Economist and Sun quoted Markham mayor Don Cousens as saying that we have to find a way of crossing our boundaries. "The public isn't served unless we look for a way of working across the GTA."

Elyse Allan, the president and CEO of the Toronto board of trade, said in a press release, "The GTSB is needed to cope with the stresses of rapid growth."

Mississauga mayor Hazel McCallion was quoted in the Toronto Sun as saying that the proposed Greater Toronto Services Board would "promote and facilitate coordinated

municipal decision-making on issues and services spilling over jurisdictional boundaries." I would like to point out that Mayor McCallion is also one of the vocal voices saying that this bill does not go far enough, that it should be stronger, that it should have more teeth. I talked to the mayor earlier today and indicated to her that we have to walk before we run, and that by getting this board up and running now, we will be able to start the process of coordination. I'm confident that the members of the board will expand the roles and responsibilities of the Greater Toronto Services Board as is needed.

This bill is a starting point. It's based on a number of years of consultation and discussion. The board which this legislation would create may have to change in the future. I'm quite confident that it will. As a matter of fact, I hope it will. That's the way the legislation is designed. This bill provides that starting point. It's that first step. It's vital to the future of the entire greater Toronto area.

I recommend that we take that first step now. It's an important first step. I think the members of the opposition would agree it's one that, while it doesn't provide the perfect answer for all of the stakeholders, needs to be implemented to get the process started, to start that coordination across the greater Toronto area, to fix those problems — as I mentioned earlier, simple transit problems of trying to get seamless transit across regional boundaries.

There is currently a dispute between Mississauga and Toronto on a single bus route that has the potential of causing disruption of hundreds of thousands of transit users every day. We need that coordination and that co-operation to ensure that this seamless transit operation can be put in place, and the Greater Toronto Services Board is the mechanism that would make that happen.

1900

Mr William Saunderson (Eglinton): I am very pleased tonight to be able to speak on Bill 56, which is the Greater Toronto Services Board Act, 1998. I might say that it's a great honour for me to be able to follow in the footsteps of my colleague the Honourable Al Leach, who I think has spoken very well tonight and has a very important bill in front of us.

The creation of the Greater Toronto Services Board makes a good deal of sense to me, and I'm very happy, as I say, to speak to it. I think we all acknowledge the need for coordination of the services in the GTA.

Over the years as Toronto, then Metropolitan Toronto and now the greater Toronto area has grown, this region has prospered, and changes have been required to keep pace with the demand for services.

I grew up in the city of Toronto. What was at that time a major Canadian city would be, by today's standards, hardly more than a town. I have witnessed great growth in this city and region and much change, and I am proud of the result. I think we are doing even better with this bill tonight.

Even then, Toronto was the engine of growth for Ontario. As the province and the country developed and changed over the years, the city grew, and as it attracted

new residents from all over Canada and regions of the world, it also prospered. We now have over 100 languages spoken in the GTA region. Municipal government had to keep pace with the increasing demands for services over that period of time. I think we are doing that with this bill.

In 1953, to go back in history, the province had the foresight to plan for future development, and Metro Toronto came into being, not without its detractors at that time, just as we have had over the last few years with our new legislation. But in the long run, things have proven to be right, just as what we are doing will be proven to be right and is right now proving to be right.

Many of us remember the days of Big Daddy, Fred Gardiner, who many people regard as the father of metropolitan government, a very important man in the development of this region. Indeed, civic politicians and administrators came from all over North America to observe our experiment in municipal governance and to hail it as the way of the future.

Toronto and its suburbs continue to prosper and develop, each one competing for its share of commercial and industrial development while maintaining historic and individual characteristics. Metro started in 1953 — think of that — as 13 municipalities working together to provide essential services to the residents. There were growing pains, as there always are, and changes were made in how Metro was governed. In 1966, the number of municipalities was reduced to six. In January 1998, those local governments and the regional government were merged into one city of Toronto at last. All these changes or progressions were difficult, but they were and are necessary.

Now we must look beyond the new city of Toronto to the developing municipalities of the greater Toronto area and once again plan a coordinated approach to the delivery of services. The GTA is the engine of the provincial economy. It produces almost one half of Ontario's GDP. It is a regional economy, consisting of diverse communities which depend on each other for their economic well-being and quality of life. Quite frankly, for the purposes of planning, I would like to see the GTA operate some day as a single independent economic unit.

I want to focus right now on the economic advantages to the entire region of a coordinated approach to services. We need to continue to attract business and investment to our region. I can tell you, in speaking to people who are in the business world all around the world, these people are very clear about what they're looking for when they look for expansion in our province and in our region of Toronto. They're looking for lower taxes; we're giving them that. They're looking for a business-friendly approach; we are a business-friendly government. They're looking for no surprises. They don't want tax increases like the 63 tax increases over the previous 10 years before our government took over. They want predictability, stability. They want to know that what they plan will be possible. They want a superb infrastructure. We have a superb infrastructure, and with this bill we're going to produce an even better one.

The GTA indeed has a great deal to offer. We have a great location in the GTA. We are within a day's drive of almost 150 million people. We have an excellent workforce. Almost 60% of our workforce has some post-secondary education.

We have a quality of life. We have a social safety net. We have safe streets. We have a cultural life which is the envy of many. And a key component of all that they want, as I mentioned earlier, is our infrastructure. Ontario, and particularly the GTA, is well served by roads, rail, municipal services, our telecommunications network. It follows that access to an excellent, seamless public transit system is a plus. That's what people are looking for, and that's why I'm pleased to be able to speak about this bill. The GTA needs a coordinated and orderly approach to the region's infrastructure. This legislation is a first step in that direction. Following three months of consultation on the draft legislation, Bill 56 was introduced in this place last June. All involved municipal governments have had the opportunity to provide their comments and suggestions. It is now time to move forward on this legislation.

Bill 56 provides for the creation of a Greater Toronto Services Board and a Greater Toronto Transit Authority. Every GTA municipality would be represented by at least one member, with Hamilton-Wentworth having a representative for transit matters, as has already been mentioned. This is good governance. It provides for a businesslike approach, with the necessary officers being established and installed, a sharing of capital costs and all that goes with it, and other expenses. Quite frankly, this bill is a paint-by-numbers kit on how to run the various services needed in this region, and it makes sense.

In addition to exercising general direction and control over GO Transit, the Greater Toronto Services Board will provide a forum for municipalities to work together to coordinate and improve municipal services, and hopefully to avoid the duplication of services. What we don't want is duplication. As was the case with Metropolitan Toronto, the GTSB will evolve over time as needs dictate. This is an excellent beginning.

Representing a city riding — my riding is Eglinton — you may ask how the GTSB impacts on my constituents. I would like to tell you that creating a forum to develop efficient services across the GTA benefits everyone in this region, not just my constituents. The system of weighted voting ensures that the interests of my constituents will be fairly represented by their municipal representatives.

In studies of the GTA by Anne Golden, David Crombie and Libby Burnham, all very respected individuals in this community, all of those people identified the GTA as a single community of interests and expressed their concerns about the lack of coordination of services. I would draw your attention to the support for the GTSB from Elyse Allan of the Toronto Board of Trade, Don Cousens, the mayor of Markham, Steve Parish, the mayor of Ajax, Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga, and Gordon Chong, a Metro councillor. This is just to name a few of the many in this region who support what we are doing.

Improving our competitive position and attracting and retaining businesses in this region is essential to our economic growth. The GTA is not the only municipal region that is dealing with the problems associated with growth and the need for regional planning. The Greater Vancouver Regional District is a partnership among 20 municipalities and two electoral areas in the Vancouver region. It is not so much a regional government as a form of governance for certain functions. Its governing board is indirectly elected through appointments from and by members of municipal councils.

Last February, the GVRD board and the province of British Columbia established the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority, which is responsible for major roads as well as public transit. I think that Bill 56 offers a solution better suited to our needs than what they have in Vancouver. Greater Montreal is organized into 14 regional municipalities, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is currently reviewing a new governance institution, the Metropolitan Development Commission. So we are moving ahead in the GTA to resolve the duplication of services just like they're doing in Vancouver and Montreal. I think we're doing it better in the GTA region.

The regions anchored by Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto are all responding to the need for coordination of regional services to meet their own region's needs. I think that the solution proposed by this government is by far the most efficient and responsive compared to those other cities.

1910

I had the privilege of being at the World Economic Forum in Davos. When I was there in 1997, I was able to attend a session on mega-cities. The Mega-Cities Project is a non-profit, transnational network dedicated to sharing innovative solutions to the problems of the world's largest cities. If I may quote from their material, it says: "By the year 2000, more than half of the world's population will live in cities. It is projected that 23 of these cities will be mega-cities, with more than 10 million people in each." We are not of that size, and it'll take a long time for us to ever become that. But what they're saying I think makes a lot of sense.

Despite their varying political, economic, social and cultural characteristics, all of them face a common problem. They must provide workable cities for unprecedented numbers of citizens within limited budgets and severe environmental constraints. The time is right for new approaches. The time is right for the approach that we are making with Bill 56 in the GTA region.

Bill 56 is responding sensibly to what the mega-cities' concerns are. I note that in the Toronto Star today, Case Ootes, the deputy mayor of Toronto, is quoted as saying that: "We want the GTSB because that's the only way you can address the interregion transportation issues, the waste disposal issues and others that have interregion ramifications."

We're all fond of saying that there's only one taxpayer. So let's move ahead on providing that taxpayer — that's all of us and all of our constituents — with efficient

coordinated services across the entire region. Bill 56 makes sense and will benefit all of our constituents.

Ms Mushinski: It gives me particular pleasure to rise in the House this evening and speak in support of Bill 56, and that's for a very special reason. I feel that I was very much a part of the original study process that took place, studies of the greater Toronto area done by Milt Farrow, Anne Golden, Libby Burnham and David Crombie. Certainly I can recall very well being visited by those individuals to ask what my particular impressions were of coordinating many of the services that were needed to be coordinated in the greater Toronto area.

It was fairly obvious a few years ago when Anne Golden said that the economic, social and environmental well-being of Toronto across the GTA truly are inextricably linked. It was also recognized, I believe, by both Anne Golden and David Crombie that there was a lack of coordination across the GTA, and that actually was a barrier to the overall economic health of the region. So it particularly pleases me to see Bill 56, which was introduced in June, because this bill actually creates that missing link that has really been needed for many, many years. It creates a Greater Toronto Services Board.

When I say that the current municipal structure has needed that necessary link for many years and decades, it has really been difficult to actually coordinate a lot of regional municipal structures. In fact, in some cases it has been virtually impossible. I agree wholeheartedly with my honourable colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, because he inherently recognizes that municipal boundaries should not stand in the way of providing taxpayers with seamless, effective and efficient service.

If this bill is passed, the GTSB will indeed create a forum for municipalities across the greater Toronto area to improve coordination of infrastructure, transportation, transit and growth management. The GTSB will ensure that the GTA remains a thriving, growing, prosperous region. The legislation would assist municipal governments in the GTA to work better for the people they serve. We have consulted extensively, and I alluded to that. I have had a number of discussions, both with Mr Crombie and certainly with Mr Tonks, as they have gone through this particular process to create this model, which I think is state of the art. They have made necessary changes that address the concerns of the various stakeholders. In fact, I believe Bill 56 is the culmination of a great deal of good negotiation and give and take between the various stakeholders — some of the rural and outer-region municipalities as well as those within Toronto itself. I think it has been an excellent process.

The bill, as introduced, will ensure that every municipality in the greater Toronto area, including upper and lower tiers, where they exist, will have at least one member on the GTSB. The GTSB's job will be to promote coordination in the delivery of services, but the GTSB will not have any direct service responsibilities at this time beyond the operation of GO Transit. I agree with the Premier and I certainly agree with the minister when they

say that while we need this effort at coordination right now, we feel that the board will evolve over time. If, after several years of operation, the board chooses to make changes, these changes can certainly be made, and probably will be made at the time.

I won't go through all of the background of the GTSB, because I know Minister Leach did that, but I think it's important to highlight the endorsements that the process leading up to this bill — which I believe has been an excellent process — has led to. For example, the deputy mayor of Toronto, Case Oates, said in the *Toronto Star* on November 25, "We want the GTSB because that's the only way you can address the interregion transportation issues, the waste disposal issues and others that have interregion ramifications."

1920

I'll just do a little sidebar here. When I was on Scarborough council, I was Scarborough council's TTC liaison. I used to go down and heckle Mr Leach, who was the general manager at the time, lobbying for more service for my region. I can recall at that time that one of the biggest battles facing the TTC was this issue of finding loops on the other side of Steeles Avenue in order to better serve the transit needs of Metropolitan Toronto riders. This particular bill is going to be able to encourage much greater cooperation to deal with those kinds of issues.

Elyse Allan, president and CEO of the Toronto Board of Trade, said on June 26, 1998, "The GTSB is needed to cope with the stresses of rapid growth."

Don Cousens, the mayor of Markham — I believe my colleague for Eglinton alluded to his support for this: "We've got to have a way of crossing our boundaries. The public isn't served unless we look for a way of working across the GTA."

To go on just a little further, before I wrap up, Steve Parish, the mayor of the town of Ajax, said: "It's not effective to have a debate in the *Toronto Star* on an ongoing basis. We have to have a forum to debate the issues."

I'm going to allot the rest of the time, if I may, to my colleague from Wentworth-East, and just urge that the whole House support this. It is one of the best bills for a co-operative effort of regions and municipalities that I can think of.

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): I'm going to be speaking on this bill tonight because of the effect it has on the Hamilton-Wentworth region as it involves GO Transit.

People may be asking who exactly will be responsible for the operation of GO Transit. The GT Transit Authority, reporting to the GTSB, would be established to operate the existing GO Transit regional transit system. The GTSB will be responsible for approving GO Transit's operating budget, major service changes, expansion, fare increases, and determining the formula by which GO's costs are apportioned among the GTSB municipalities.

GT Transit would supervise the day-to-day operations of the transit authority under the direction of its own board of directors. Just exactly who will be on the board of directors? For the initial term, the current GO Transit

directors and chair would be the GT Transit board. For subsequent terms, each municipality, including my municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, would appoint one member from among their GTSB members, with the chair chosen by the GTSB.

The GTA is indeed one very large economic community. The benefits of efficient transit across the entire area are felt far beyond the riders. The downtown businesses that employ those riders or depend on them as customers would all benefit. GO Transit has a positive effect on the economic health of the entire GTA inside Toronto and in the 905 regions, including my own of Hamilton-Wentworth.

The government is transferring responsibility for GO Transit to the city of Toronto and the regional municipalities of the GTA because it is consistent with the government's policy to transfer responsibility and accountability for local services to local government.

The allocation formula established in the Services Improvement Act and the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority Act regulations was developed in consultation with the GTA, regional municipalities and the city of Toronto. Under the proposed GTSB act, the GTSB would have the power to change the formula if it so desires.

The Ministry of Transportation has received input from the affected regions on guiding principles associated with the continued operation and funding of GO Transit, including their suggestion regarding cost allocation. The guiding principles were ability to pay, level of service and systems used.

The allocation of capital expansion costs among the GTA municipalities will be up to the GTSB to decide. The formula which is currently in place through the Services Improvement Act and the regulations passed under the Toronto Area Operating Authority Act addresses only system operating costs and normal capital rehabilitation. The GTSB may change the allocation of GO Transit, the GT Transit costs, among Toronto and the regions with a two-thirds vote of the board. The city of Toronto or any of the regions may propose a new cost allocation formula for the GTSB to consider. Toronto will have 50% of the votes, the same percentage that it has when the GTSB is considering non-GO Transit matters. This differs from what had been recommended originally by Mr Tonks, by the way. Toronto would have had slightly less than 50% of the votes when the board voted on GO matters.

People may wonder, are Toronto and regions currently paying GO Transit costs? The answer is yes. The five regions and Toronto became responsible for the operating subsidy for GO Transit on January 1 of this year. Services operated beyond the transit services area will continue to operate following the transfer. Agreement may subsequently be negotiated between GT Transit and the affected municipalities. The province will continue to honour the terms and conditions associated with the sale-back agreement for GO Transit rail equipment. The province will also work co-operatively with the GTSB in planning and protecting GO Transit and broader provincial interests when conducting broader transportation

planning studies. Once the Greater Toronto Services Board is established, GO Transit-related MCORF funds will be released.

The draft legislation does not provide for the automatic transfer of GO Transit employees to GT Transit. Management-excluded employees of GO Transit who accept employment with GT Transit will have their severance entitlement transferred to the new GT Transit. If GT Transit later terminates their employment, they will receive credit for both GT and GO Transit service. This is consistent with how similar transfers are handled in the private sector. For GO Transit employees whose jobs are within a bargaining unit, GO and GT Transit in association with provincial government representatives will discuss issues such as offers of employment, severance entitlement and other transitional matters with GO Transit unions.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): It sounds like a newspaper report. Is it?

Hon Mr Leach: If it is, it's a good one.

Mr Doyle: I used to do that too.

GO Transit employees who do not accept employment with GT Transit, by the way, will be entitled to the same payments as employees who currently resign from GO Transit.

In my few minutes left I'd like to say that the legislation will result in the transfer of GO Transit to municipal control. The GT Transit operation will continue to need drivers, mechanics, ticket sellers, office workers and managers. For those non-bargaining employees who accept their employment with GT Transit, their severance entitlement will also be transferred to GT Transit. Under these circumstances, it would not be a good use of public funds to pay termination payments to these employees, since they will not have experienced any break in their employment. Therefore, the termination pay provisions in the draft GTSB legislation will ensure that no legal technicality requires the payout to those who will continue to be employed. The changes ensure that GO Transit employees will receive the same treatment as private sector employees. The Employment Standards Act provides for transfer severance liability in the private sector.

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Mr Gerretsen: The latest bulletin.

Mr Doyle: That's just been handed to me.

There may be questions about the necessity to have discussions with GO Transit trade unions. While these unions are the legal representatives of their members in employment-associated matters, ratification of any agreement would have to wait until GT Transit has been legally established. A similar problem was overcome in negotiations with bargaining agents associated with the transfer of the Queen Street psychiatric hospital.

For questions related to the GTSB generally, Hal Linscott at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing can be reached if further information is needed. We can give you his telephone number if you require it.

There are other points that I would like to make.

On June 25, of course, Bill 56 was introduced and, if passed, the bill will create the Greater Toronto Services Board which we're speaking about tonight. The need for coordination of services in the GTA has been recognized for a number of decades and under the current municipal structure coordination has been difficult, and in some cases it has been impossible.

Municipal boundaries should not stand in the way of providing taxpayers with seamless and efficient service. If the bill is passed, and I'm sure it will be, the GTSB will create a forum for municipalities across the greater Toronto area to improve coordination of infrastructure, transportation, transit and growth management. The GTSB would ensure that the GTA remains a thriving, growing and prosperous region.

This legislation would also assist municipal governments in the GTA to work better for the people they serve. We have consulted extensively, as the minister has said, on the GTSB and have made necessary changes to address concerns of the various stakeholders. The bill as introduced ensures that every municipality in the greater Toronto area, including upper and lower tier, will have at least one member on the GTSB.

The GTSB's job will be to promote coordination in the delivery of services, but the GTSB will not have any direct services responsibility beyond the operation of GO Transit. The board will evolve over time. If, after several years of operation, the board chooses to make changes, then these changes of course will be made, as Minister Leach pointed out a little bit earlier.

That's about all I have to say on the matter tonight. We certainly hope this bill will be given the recognition that is needed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Jack Carroll): Questions and comments?

Mr Gerretsen: I would just like to comment on the statements that were made by the minister and the other three members in one aspect in particular, and that deals with the fact that on a number of occasions they indicated that they were basically following the Anne Golden and the Crombie reports. I'm sure the people who are watching out there may be under the impression that in effect those two reports have been adopted in this bill when in fact nothing could be further from the truth.

You may recall, Mr Speaker, that the Golden report talked about direct election to this board. That's not happening. The Golden report also talked about actually giving this board some power and authority to make binding decisions upon the lower-tier municipalities. That's a very important aspect. That's not happening here either.

The only power that this board really has is to authorize itself enough money for the board itself to operate, but it cannot get involved in any kind of programming, any kind of servicing or even bind any of the lower municipalities to any of the decisions that the board makes. So what we really have here is sort of a grand version of a planning board and a planning committee. Although there is nothing wrong with that to start off this process with, to somehow leave the impression that the Crombie report and the Anne Golden report are adopted

with the adoption of this law is simply incorrect in these two major aspects.

The other issue that we have is that here this board is intended to start operating I believe on January 1, which is not much more than a month away. Why has it been five months to the day since this bill was given first reading in order for this legislation to come back here again, allowing for very little scrutiny by the affected parties, by the people in this metropolitan area of almost four million people that we're talking about? The bill is lacking.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): This bill is yet another example of this government at the end of the day having to come up with ways to respond to inadequacies and shortcomings of previous initiatives and legislation. Don't get me wrong. I don't think there's anybody in this House who doesn't believe in the notion of coordination and having communities and different regions working together, but if this government had in the first go-round taken the time to listen to the people of Toronto and Metro and the GTA re what it was that they wanted, we would probably be going down a far different path at this time in our history. We would have a different combination of government vehicles delivering services which would go a long way to alleviating some of the difficulties we see apparent in the bill that we have before us here today.

This bill continues the bias that this government seems to not be able to get over re the city of Toronto. They're creating a very weak board that does nothing to prevent urban sprawl, nothing for economic development, and really nothing at the end of the day for public transit. The board locks in place the unfair system that sees Toronto pay 49% of the cost of subsidizing GO, despite the fact that an estimated 85% of the riders live in the 905. I suggest that we'll find, as we go along, that this bill presents other challenges of equal concern, particularly for the people of Toronto.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to provide some comments on the speeches given by my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the member for Eglinton, the member for Wentworth East and the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere. I thought they spoke very eloquently on the effects of Bill 56 and its impact on the Metro area, now known, of course, as the greater Toronto area.

I thought in particular the member for Eglinton was most helpful in his comments in which he spoke about how the city of Toronto is booming and how well they've done particularly since 1995, probably no coincidence since we were the government at that time. The member for Scarborough-Ellesmere also provided some comments and some insights into her own riding and how the projections for the greater Toronto area services will impact on Scarborough in particular. Of course the minister's comments tied things up quite nicely, I thought, in that he commented on how he would work together with the caucus members from the Toronto area in putting together the bill.

I thought with the four speakers we had a nice cross-section. We had the member for Wentworth East, who has

not only helped with a last-minute bulletin, which of course he's used to dealing with in the profession he came from, but I thought he also provided a nice balance to the members from the Toronto area in that he analyzed the Greater Toronto Services Board issue from his position in the province. I thought their comments were quite useful. They were clearly well prepared, and I certainly enjoyed their speeches.

1940

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm delighted to see that so far we haven't had an advertising campaign surrounding this bill. Now, it may be early — I know that — and we've got the bill up to \$57 million now on what I call partisan political advertising, but I know that the government may be thinking of that. I even hate to mention it because a mere mention of that means we'll see my friend Al Leach's picture in all of these tapes and all these TV commercials with his friend the Premier extolling the virtues of this next bill. So I shouldn't mention that.

I should mention, however — as you would know, Mr Speaker, being from Chatham-Kent and having to come into Toronto — that there is a problem with transportation. You may be aware as well, Mr Speaker, that in fact the Ontario government has withdrawn much of its support for transportation within our communities. So I can see that both Toronto and the surrounding areas are going to be perturbed about this and trying to find ways to provide public transportation because, of course, our highways are clogged at this time and we know that we can help the environment — certainly the air quality in our province — by the province making an investment in public transportation, and as well we can make it much easier on the nerves of people coming into this large community if we have adequate transportation.

We would like to see in the Niagara Peninsula, for instance, coming to St Catharines or Niagara Falls, some transportation facilities on rail — perhaps an enhanced Via Rail system; perhaps a GO Transit system. I don't expect it's going to run the way it does from Mississauga into Toronto — that often, in other words — but I think there may be an opportunity to do that. I know the local transit commission, the St Catharines Transit Commission, is beside itself over the fact that it has lost so much funding from the province that it may be forced to cut back on the excellent service it provides the people of St Catharines.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, final comments.

Hon Mr Leach: I would like to thank all the members of the House who took part in the debate this evening with some very interesting comments.

I'd like to respond to the member for Kingston and The Islands when he indicated that we didn't implement the recommendations that were put forward by Anne Golden and Crombie. I would like to point out that's because we listened to the people in the regions and we consulted with all the stakeholders in the regions and modified the recommendations to suit what the regions and all the stakeholders indicated they needed to operate.

The member for St Catharines made a very good suggestion. This bill has a great deal of merit. The people of this area should know about it. His suggestion to have an advertising campaign may be well worthwhile pursuing. I'll see what I can do. I thank the member for St Catharines for that suggestion.

The member for Sault Ste Marie suggested that the funding formula for GO Transit is not fair. The city of Toronto pays 49% of the cost of GO Transit and that's based on the fact that they have 50% of the population. They also should take into consideration that the social services costs for across the greater Toronto area are now being pooled so that those people who are living in Mississauga and Durham are assisting the city of Toronto with their social services costs. That's one of the points of this whole bill, which is to ensure that the greater Toronto area operates as one entity; that there is coordination and cooperation for the delivery of services, for the delivery of transit, for the delivery of social services. By implementing this bill and having that board in place, we will accomplish that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 56 on the establishment of the Greater Toronto Services Board. There's virtually no question by anyone of the need for some coordinating body. I think the minister said words to that effect. Certainly in my discussions with people and groups across what's called the GTA, the greater Toronto area, there's virtual unanimity on that. I say virtual because I think there are few who wouldn't necessarily agree with it. So the issue really is around what's the best form for that to take.

Just to review for ourselves the history of how we arrived here, I think we have been fairly well served by the political structures in the greater Toronto area. The first major attempt at coordinating policy across this area probably was taken by the mayors and the regional chairs I think about seven years ago when the GTA mayors and chairs committee was set up, led, I might add, by the mayor of Mississauga, and I think it was probably Hazel McCallion's idea. That forum has met monthly. I happen to attend as an invited guest. The ministers always sit at the table and I'm at the back with the spectators, but that's fine. That's the way it works. They're very courteous to me, I might add.

It performs a worthwhile function. It has taken issues and it has made progress on them. They established — I won't have the right term here — an economic group that on a GTA-wide basis coordinates economic activity, tries to attract industry to the area. I think that's functioned well. They also have taken on specific issues of concern. The mayors or their appointees study them and make recommendations. I can tell you that they are well-researched, well-thought-out proposals that without a question of a doubt influence the government.

Also, I think the fact that the mayors meet on a monthly basis — the size of the area is always interesting to me. They met once on Lake Simcoe, which is part of the GTA,

and they've met from Oshawa to Oakville. They met recently at Glen Abbey, I think last week. No golfing, all business.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Shame.

Mr Phillips: Shame, as you say, but my point is this: The mayors and regional chairs meeting on a regular basis know each other well, they share the issues well and they tackle the issues well. But I think the vast majority have reached the same conclusion as most, that it is now time to take it the next step forward, which is to establish perhaps a more formal basis and mechanism. That's what we're discussing here tonight: What should the form of that be?

I thought the member for Eglinton articulated well what's at stake here. I think we live in probably the finest urban environment in North America, in this GTA. I think there are some objective studies that would support that. I always loved the expression that Toronto is closer to more major US cities than any major US city is, in that we are uniquely geographically located. It's no accident that trains that run from Boston and New York to Chicago run through Ontario, because we are in a terrific geographic location and it has been one of the reasons why this has been a terrific economic engine, led by, I might add, the auto sector.

What's at stake here is, how do we preserve and enhance and improve this urban living environment? I don't think there's much doubt that now we have to take another step. Actually, I don't think there's any choice, if we look at it objectively. First, the government has made the decision to download all of GO Transit. I'm not going to debate the merits of that one way or another. It's just a fact that it's been done. All the costs previously picked up heavily by the province will now have to be picked up by the regions in the GTA. So that's happened; that's a fact. We now have to establish a body that will deal with that.

Later on in my remarks I will say that's one area in the bill of significant concern to us, the way that the financial matters of the transit board are arrived at, the two thirds majority vote to change the existing formula. I would just want to express a concern that it could very well lead to gridlock on the GO system as opposed to the necessary expansion of GO. That is the first reason why it has to be done.

The second reason is that social housing and social assistance have been heavily downloaded — social housing, 100% — on to municipalities and now, in this area around the GTA, social housing costs are what's called "pooled." The minister mentioned this. The regions around the city of Toronto are now picking up a fairly substantial portion of the cost of social housing in the city of Toronto. That, without a question of a doubt, will lead in the months and years ahead to quite a debate, and understandably so. There's the old taxation without representation issue plus, of course, the obvious coordinating things that need to be done.

Everything from the transit board will work on transit coordination. This proposal also is that the economic coordinating body will be under the GTSB, and I think

that makes sense. It allows for a study to be done on infrastructure in the greater Toronto area, and that makes sense as well.

It also allows for the board to take on mandates that are recommended to it by its members. If the board votes in favour of dealing with it, then the board can deal with it, although it has only one real decision-making power, and that is in the transit area. The rest is in an advisory form.

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That is the second issue that I think one needs to debate: Does this board have sufficient teeth? I appreciate the work done by the various studies to date: the Golden report, the Star report, the Burnham report and the Tonks report, each trying to find a workable format. The one we have before us I think has broad support out there. My understanding is that the city of Toronto is supportive of it and that many of the mayors are supportive of it. I think the region of Durham has some concerns about it, as do some of the what are called rural municipalities in the GTA. But overall it seems to have quite broad support.

The issue I want to talk about in a little more detail is the transit issue. The bill has a mechanism for dealing with funding for GO Transit. What has happened is that there is an allocation of the costs of GO: roughly 50% to the city of Toronto, and obviously 50% to the other municipalities around Toronto. That is a subject of debate. Toronto has 50% of the population, but should it pay 50% of GO Transit when I suspect probably 80% — I don't know the exact number — of the ridership comes from outside the city of Toronto: into Toronto and out of Toronto?

You could argue that they're coming in here and generating wealth and jobs in Toronto, so it's fair. I don't, but I do know this: To change that formula requires a two-thirds vote of the transit board, as does an allocation for capital. Those who are proponents of the bill will say, "This has a mechanism built in to balance it, and if the areas around Toronto want to expand GO, they're going to have to get a two-thirds vote to expand GO." To get a two-thirds vote, by definition you're going to need a significant number of city of Toronto votes. So you have this balancing mechanism. While the city of Toronto may object to the two-thirds majority to change the 50% funding formula, the mechanism for change in the funding formula could be through the decision made when the surrounding municipalities may want to expand GO.

It still is troubling. I'm concerned that we run the risk of institutionalizing stagnation at GO, with the city of Toronto saying, "We're picking up 50% of the cost of this thing and we just can't afford to see that budget increased substantially. We can't afford to see a substantial increase in the GO cost when we're picking up 50% of it." That is going to be a concern.

The decision we have to make is, is this a far enough step forward? My opinion is that we need a coordinating body of some sort. The mayors' and the chair's committee has served us well but now we need to move on from there. Is this far enough? It's got broad acceptance out

there, but it has decision-making power on really only one issue and that is the transit issue.

It's silent on social housing and social assistance, other than saying that — this is what is called the compendium, which explains the bill. It says that the powers of the Greater Toronto Services Board are promoting coordinated decision-making among municipalities within the GTA with respect to the administration and cost of social assistance and social housing. I predict that will become a significant issue for the GTSB. Right now the only role it can play is in persuasion, and perhaps that's all that can be done at this moment, but it is a signal that it will only be a matter of a few years, perhaps a very few years, before that issue bubbles up. Without a decision-making mechanism at the Greater Toronto Services Board, I think we're going to see some frustration there, particularly recognizing that I believe the regions will be contributing probably \$100 million to the city of Toronto for housing and for social assistance.

The process that's been followed in this has been quite long, but I think that most bodies have had significant input into it. From our party's perspective, we recognize and accept the need for a board; we recognize and accept the need for a board to be established sooner rather than later, and you will not find us standing in the road of the legislation moving forward. We have, as I say, a major concern on whether this formula for transit will lead to a log-jam on GO Transit. I just looked at GO Transit's annual report, and it is a system that works well. It has served this area well for 25 or 30 years now and it undoubtedly needs to expand and will. If this formula gets in the road of the necessary expansion, I think we've done more harm than good. As I say, one of the key reasons why this has to proceed is because of the downloading. I don't think we have a choice in establishing some board to deal with GO Transit.

I want to go back to some of the side benefits that I see in this coordinating body, things I don't have any question on. We are going to need to have a group of talented people focused on this urban area dealing with transit, which is obvious, but also on our road infrastructure. I'm supportive of Highway 407. I think the 407 is a necessary addition to our infrastructure, particularly when so much of our economy relies on the auto sector, relies on guaranteed delivery. The GTSB can play a role in making sure that our road system is coordinated.

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There are also going to be waste disposal issues in the future, environmental issues. Crombie, who has been active in this process, continually reminds us that we are dealing with an integrated ecosystem that doesn't stop at municipal boundaries, that needs that coordination, and I see this body playing that role. I see this body playing an expanded role in the development of our economic coordination. I see this body wrestling with the issue of social housing and social assistance, because I think it's going to be a very difficult issue for the body to deal with.

I have had an opportunity to hear from virtually most of the municipalities involved in this and I think that the

proposed structure probably has struck, in terms of representation, not a bad balance. There was significant concern among the more rural communities that their voices would not be heard on this board. It may not be perfect, but there is a significant recognition of that. Many of the mayors — if my memory serves me right, of Oshawa, Mississauga, Markham and Brampton; I may not have this right — advocated a slightly stronger board with more power, if I'm not mistaken. But it may be that to get this rolling you have to, as someone once said, walk before you run on it.

To summarize my own conclusions and thoughts on the bill, I don't think there's much doubt that we need a coordinating body. We need to take the next step forward, as I've said. This is a body that has less authority than certainly any of the three studies proposed: Farrow, Burnham and Golden. I think they all proposed more authority for this board. I recognize that we may have to take our first step here, have them work through the issue of the GO Transit and deal with that issue, and begin to wrestle with some of the other issues before they get a complete mandate.

My major concern is, on the one issue where the board has financial authority, that there is at least the risk of a log-jam here where the city of Toronto is saying, "We're funding 50% of this thing but we don't see 50% of the benefit," but needing a two-thirds majority to change the formula, and the other body is saying, "The minister is saying we don't need the" —

Hon Mr Leach: GO has a different formula.

Mr Phillips: The minister says, GO has a different formula for funding. I'll be interested in hearing that because that's not my reading of the bill. If the GO formula — the minister is suggesting that they don't need a two-thirds majority to change the allocation.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: The allocation is 50%, and if you want to change the 50%, you need a two-thirds vote. You don't need a two-thirds vote to approve their budget, but if you want to change the funding allocation, you need a two-thirds vote. If that's not the case, I'll be interested to hear that, because that's not my reading of the bill. The minister may be able to clarify that before we go too much further.

That is a major concern. We do not have a problem with the establishment of a board. We do not have a problem with the need for a board and we are supportive of the need to move sooner rather than later on the establishment of a board.

With those comments, I'll let my colleague take over.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): The member for Kingston and the beautiful Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I know that you know they're beautiful islands because you've been in the area many times, having one member in your own family reside in that beautiful part of Ontario.

Just dealing with the issue that my colleague and the minister were talking about — and maybe the minister can help me out on this — when I read section 61 of the act, it states, "For the purpose of carrying out its object" — and

that's basically to run GO Transit — "the board may, by bylaw,

"(b) apportion the costs of GT Transit, including the board's cost of borrowing for the purposes of GT Transit, among the participating municipalities;

"(c) borrow money for, and pay such money to, GT Transit in respect of its capital requirements...;" and

"(d) direct one or more participating municipalities to pay money to GT Transit in respect of its capital requirements."

Those are the three sections that basically deal with the funding of GO Transit.

Then when you look at subsection 61(3), it specifically says that the passage of a bylaw under the clauses I referred to "or an amendment to such a bylaw requires a two-thirds majority of the votes cast."

What that is saying is that if you want to do anything with respect to the funding formula and arrangements between the municipalities, two thirds of the members who are on the board will have to agree to that. If you have a situation where 50% of it is paid by Toronto and 50% by the areas outside of Toronto, it may be very difficult to change that amending formula for cost sharing if in effect you need a two-thirds vote on that. Unless the minister can clarify that, the direction set out in the proposed legislation is quite clear and the concern we have in that regard is, has the board been set up in such a way that the current funding formula will never be changed if the people who are representatives on this board feel that by changing that formula it would be disadvantaging the areas they represent? It's going to be difficult to change that, and unless an amendment is going to be brought into that in that respect, it's simply not going to happen.

I find it very curious, as indicated before, that here we have a bill that was introduced on June 25 and given first reading, and now it's November 25, exactly five months later, and it's being given second reading. It's supposed to be implemented by January 1 of next year, so that gives us less than five weeks. One of the reasons the minister gave was that all the stakeholders had been consulted initially, I suppose, through the Anne Golden report, then through the Crombie report, and then Milt Farrow was retained by the minister to negotiate with the stakeholders as well.

I'll compare that to something that has happened with another bill that we discussed this afternoon — I'm just doing this for comparison purposes only — which is Bill 79. If we are to take the minister at face value that all these consultations have taken place, and it's only with the stakeholders, which is interesting — I'm not sure how much consultation has in fact taken place with respect to the citizens who are out there; I'm sure that many of them really don't know what's going on in this respect right now, but let's for the moment accept the fact that a lot of consultation has taken place — my question is, with respect to an issue that is of great importance to all of the property taxpayers in the province of Ontario, particularly the commercial property taxpayers in this province: Why did that same level of consultation not take place with

respect to Bill 79, which is the latest of the seven property tax bills that have been introduced here?

You don't have to take our word for that, but let's just see what the Clerks and Treasurers have said about that. They came right out with a 14-page document today in which they are condemning Bill 79, in which they are basically saying it is one of the worst pieces of provincial legislation they've ever seen. The worst part of it all is that these are the Clerks and Treasurers who deal with our taxation bills on a day-to-day basis in our municipalities. These people have offered their services to the province.

They've been wanting to consult with the province ever since February 1997 and they have been totally ignored. We had a meeting with them earlier today and they have basically said that even the civil servants, for whom I have a high respect, don't return their calls any more. They have set up a panel of experts to deal with the property tax situation, to allow the government to implement its proposed will in a more systematic way, in which the chaos and confusion that has been created over the last year or so is going to be absent from the scene, and they have refused to do so.

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I will get back to this bill on the Greater Toronto Services Board in a moment, but let's just hear what they say about Bill 79. They say that Bill 79 constitutes a direct intrusion by the government into municipal tax administration. The Clerks and Treasurers are not supportive of the role assumed by the provincial government in setting an education levy. That levy is to be collected by the municipalities for the use of the province.

Hon Mr Leach: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the purpose of the debate in the Legislature is to debate the bill in question. Although I know we allow leeway for members to ramble on other issues, the member deliberately stated that he was going to digress from the bill to speak about Bill 79. I would respectfully request that you remind the member that the bill in question is Bill 56.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): A point of order.

The Acting Speaker: I'll take one point of order at a time. The honourable member is quite correct. I'd ask you to pertain your comments in the debate to the bill at hand.

Mr Len Wood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum in here. I know the Conservative members are quite interested in what's going on, but we should have a quorum here to listen to the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Did you have another point of order?

Mr Gerretsen: I don't have a point of order. I just want to continue with the debate on this very important bill.

You may recall that my reason for bringing up those points was because of something the minister stated. The minister stated that with respect to Bill 56 there had been widespread consultation with the stakeholders. I was merely comparing the alleged widespread consultation with respect to that bill to the non-consultation with the experts on Bill 79. But I accept your ruling, Mr Speaker. I will address Bill 56, but I think it is rather interesting —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, I have given you a ruling on the point of order. I'd ask that your comments pertain to the bill that we're debating this evening.

Mr Gerretsen: And I will do so, Mr Speaker, because I respect your position and respect the ruling that you have made. But I do think it's kind of interesting how the government members apparently don't want to listen to anything that's said about any other bill, including Bill 79, which has been promoted by this government as a bill on which rests its entire municipal taxation policy. But I will get back to the other bill.

Somebody may say, "Why is it that a non-Metro member or a non-greater-Toronto-area member would be speaking about this bill?" One of the reasons I'm interested in it is because I'm like so many of the other members in this House who come here while the House is sitting every week, and we have to negotiate our way into Toronto, whether we're coming from the west, the east, or the north. We all know that it is almost impossible nowadays to come into downtown Toronto during rush hour and come into this place and not have that distraught feeling about the tremendous difficulties that we each encounter in getting to Queen's Park in the first place. Because if you come into this place on a weekly basis — and many people who work in downtown Toronto do it on a daily basis — the traffic problems into downtown Toronto, along our highway system, are just horrendous.

I am greatly concerned that with all the downloading this government has done with respect to the transit services — the cost of transit is now to be borne totally by local municipalities — and with respect to the downloading of many of the transportation services — the road building, the road maintenance services etc — that the idea of there being built into the downtown of Toronto a sufficiently large highway system so that — the massive traffic problems that many people encounter on a day-to-day basis will only get worse if there is no longer dedicated funding involved from the provincial government.

Let me just read to you some of the comments that have been made in that regard. I'm reading here from a Toronto Star article dated June 26 of this year, which was the day after this bill was given first reading here. It talks about the Anne Golden report. It states that in that report it was estimated that the GTA will need up to \$90 billion, which is only slightly less than the public debt of this province, to which this government has contributed at least \$20 billion to \$25 billion since it took office.

Ninety billion dollars is going to be required over the next 25 years for the infrastructure of this province. With

the downloading of services on to the local level — that includes transit, remember, and many of the highway and road responsibilities — you wonder how this kind of an investment of \$90 billion is ever going to be done in this greater Toronto area if you in effect no longer have a provincial involvement in that.

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Anne Golden had concerns about that. David Crombie had concerns about that. That's why both of those individuals and their boards thought it was so important that the Greater Toronto Services Board be given real powers, real taxation powers. I know the minister will say, "We wanted to take it one step at a time," but the point that I would simply like to make is that when you look at the transit funding and the fact that, in order for the funding arrangements to change, you need a two-thirds vote by the members on the board, and you look at these various other issues, the likelihood of something constructive happening, other than maybe along sort of the philosophical planning lines, the ability to implement that by the Greater Toronto Services Board is going to be very limited. That's why these two studies clearly indicated that something much more than what's suggested in Bill 56 should have been done.

That wasn't the only comment that was made. There was a further comment made on September 12 of this year in an editorial in the same newspaper, the *Toronto Star*. It states: "The Greater Toronto Services Board must make transportation planning a priority when it begins operations next year. But the question remains — who will pay for the necessary expansions of transit and road networks to ensure that we can get around?" That's the issue. It's not going to be the issue as to what should be planned in a philosophical or in a grand-scheme-of-things notion as to what should happen, but rather, who's going to pay for any expansion?

The editorial goes on to say: "The province must resume funding transit. If provincial politicians are unwilling to do this, then they must at least allow transit agencies to share in their revenue raised by gasoline taxes, vehicle licences or parking surcharges. There are also a growing number of municipal politicians calling on the federal government to help pay for transportation infrastructure," and I happen to agree with that. I don't think it's just a provincial responsibility, but it should be a federal responsibility as well.

That is totally absent from this bill. To somehow invoke the names of Anne Golden, who has an excellent reputation in this community and throughout the province, or David Crombie and to somehow have the people out there think these two individuals are endorsing this kind of scheme I think is really unfair. What they were endorsing was something that had much more power than this particular board has in Bill 56. It is kind of like taking the one aspect that everybody agrees on, and that's the fact that there should be some sort of coordination in the greater Toronto area, and saying that since Crombie says that and Anne Golden says that, and probably everybody out on the street says it, therefore all of these people are in

favour of that. The question is, how do you implement it and what do you do? In that respect, this bill is very weak.

Let me just review some of the actual sections in the bill in order to give you, Mr Speaker — and I know you have a profound interest in this subject — a better insight as to what this Greater Toronto Services Board is all about. When you look at section 3, for example, it states, "The following are the objects of the board" — and there are two very specific objects — "1. To promote and facilitate coordinated decision-making among the municipalities in the greater Toronto area." I think we can all agree with that. It's kind of like motherhood and apple pie. Is there anybody in this House or anywhere in this province who is not in favour of some sort of coordination between all of the area municipalities in the greater Toronto area? I would think not.

Then it says: "2. To exercise general direction and control over GT Transit and allocate the costs of GT Transit, in accordance with this act." They're the only two objects. Of course, we've already talked about the fact that the GO Transit funding formula is almost going to be impossible to change, because in order to do that you need a two-thirds vote, and half of the people come from inside Toronto and half of them come from outside Toronto. The likelihood of getting a two-thirds vote is very small.

Let's deal with the powers of the board, Mr Speaker, because I know this is another section in which you have great interest. That's section 21 of the bill on page 11. It states, "The board has the capacity, rights...of a natural person...." That's good enough, but what does it say in subsection (2)? It says, "Subsection (1) does not authorize the board to do any of the following...."

"2. Acquire or guarantee any interest in a security of a corporation.

"3. Impose fees or charges except for records, documents or publications...."

So it can't impose a fee or a charge on anybody.

"4. Incur a debt or make investments."

So it can't make the kind of capital investments that may be necessary to make the board function sufficiently.

Those are the three main areas. Basically it doesn't have any taxation powers. As a matter of fact, the only thing it can do when it comes to issues like that is it can charge for the actual operation of the board itself. That's all it can do, just charge for the cost of operating the board. In every other respect this board is just a planning agency, and if for some reason the members are unable to agree, perhaps not by unanimous voice but certainly by the vast majority of the members there, then in effect it won't be able to make any decisions in that regard.

As I finish my comments on this bill, I can tell you that even the people who live outside the greater Toronto area, like myself and many members of this House, have a tremendous interest in this. We have an interest in the greater Toronto area and in Toronto itself being regarded and being a world-class city. I think most of us, perhaps reluctantly, have pride in what's happened in Toronto over the last 25 or 30 years, as there always is a reluctance by the smaller municipalities to somehow like a larger municipality, but I think all of us, deep down in our hearts,

want Toronto to be successful. We all come here to shop at some time or other, or to go to its various entertainment facilities. We want to have a real pride in our provincial capital.

That is going to be severely tested if the ability to come in and out of this city is going to be tougher and tougher as time goes along. I can remember a time, when I first lived in Toronto some 25 or 30 years ago, when you had rush hour for maybe two hours in the morning and two hours at night. I can tell you that now, and I'm sure you experience the same thing coming in and out of the city, rush hour here is not quite yet a 24-hour operation, but it's getting close: from about 6 in the morning until 10 or 11 at night. Trying to get in and out of Toronto can at times be a major enterprise, and not just for the people who come in and out once a week like we do, Mr Speaker, but how about the people who live on the outskirts, who live in the greater Toronto area and work downtown? They have to face this each and every day.

If the province is no longer willing to pay for the infrastructure, which obviously it isn't willing to do, because of its downloading of transit services and of highway and road services etc, and if we don't give a board like the Greater Toronto Services Board the powers to implement some of the planning decisions they're going to make with respect to transit and transportation matters, then the desirability for people from outside to come into Toronto is going to be less and less, and I think this city, this area, will suffer more and more as its overall transportation and transit problems become worse and worse.

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I will simply leave it at that for now. The bill is a step in the right direction, but it is just a very small and narrow step. This government could have, if it had really taken a serious look at the Crombie recommendations and at the Anne Golden recommendations, taken a real, giant leap into the future and into the 21st century. It didn't do so, so I guess for the time being we will just have to go along with the small step they're taking in this regard. I will now turn it over to the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I want to thank my colleagues the member for Agincourt and the member for Kingston and The Islands for being kind enough to allow me a few moments to speak about this important bill, which in the total municipal picture has some significance. Believe it or not, I think I can probably relate it to my own municipality and draw some comparisons as to what's happening.

First of all, I want to say that I am assured that this bill does address problems related to transportation. I can tell you that in every constituency in this province, including the greater Toronto area, we have a growing problem with transportation as it relates to the fact that the provincial government apparently is going to abandon or has abandoned public transportation. All of the bus services and the train services — that's essentially what we talk about when we talk about our public transportation in this area — are now suffering from a dearth of funding from the provincial government.

This was part of the downloading operation. That's the operation, the Minister of Municipal Affairs will know, where his government dumped on to the municipalities a large number of onerous responsibilities and assumed some responsibilities which obviously cost less than the responsibilities which were dumped down on to the municipalities.

I don't know what it's like in Kitchener-Wilmot, but I can tell you in Niagara some \$18 million is the difference between what the regional municipality used to be responsible for and what it's responsible for now. In other words, they're down \$18 million and have to find that money somewhere. I'm glad there will be some coordination of transportation services, because what I'm concerned about is that as the province abandons the responsibility it had for assisting in the operating costs and the major capital costs of local transit commissions, that new responsibility falls on to the backs of municipalities which have had to assume other additional responsibilities and therefore would not have the money they would like to have to devote to transportation services.

We see great benefits, as I'm sure we all do. You see, coming in from the Kitchener-Waterloo area — I come in from the St Catharines area — the advantage of having GO Transit, for instance, partway along the way to both of our municipalities. I see it in Burlington and Oakville and Mississauga; at the edge of Toronto we have the GO train coming in, the government of Ontario train. That takes a number of people off the road. You probably could say it's easier on the nerves and it's a pretty efficient service, although it has some expenses to it. Just as GO Transit and the transit commissions in the greater Toronto area are finding it more onerous to deal with their needs because of the lack of provincial funding, so is the case outside the greater Toronto area.

We know that very often the people who are reliant on public transportation services are people who first of all may not have a vehicle of their own to drive, or may not choose to drive their vehicle very frequently. Second, there are those who because of physical reasons or other reasons associated with health or age cannot or choose not to use personal vehicles and must rely upon public transportation. There are people who because of their financial circumstances must rely on public transportation because they cannot afford the cost of operating a personal automobile, which of course is a considerable cost these days.

When I see the province withdrawing from that area, I am perturbed. I was talking to an individual the other day who is a small business person who repairs automobiles. One would think, "Here's a person who would believe we should have more highways and not worry too much about public transportation." This person probably voted for the Mike Harris government in the last election. By the way, he said he's not going to vote for them in this election. But this person was saying how important he considered public transportation to be, though he himself was not a person who would on any frequent basis at all be utilizing public transportation.

When I look at the role of the provincial government — and there are roles that each level of government has — I see a significant role both in terms of straight transportation and in terms of contributing to a better environment. I see the role of the provincial government as wanting to enhance and promote and fund public transportation.

You know — Mr Speaker, you would be aware of this — when we talk about subsidizing, for instance, the St Lawrence Seaway, the ships that are going through, people who are opposed to that will say, “Isn’t it awful we’re subsidizing this form of transportation?” Then if you talk of providing some infrastructure, perhaps some, for want of a better word, subsidization for rail service, whether it’s for passenger purposes or freight purposes, you again hear a hue and cry about the fact that there’s some subsidization for that.

We don’t hear any hue and cry about the subsidization for trucks that are on the highways. We keep building the highways wider and wider, and we have to resurface them and deal with other problems that we confront with those highways on an ongoing basis. We seem to accept the fact that we will invest in our highways, but often seem reluctant to invest in rail or water transportation. It would be my submission that this is a role the provincial government should play, a leadership role and a funding role, as I hope it will play within the jurisdiction of the Greater Toronto Services Board.

The problem we face, for instance, on our highway system is that people in various parts of the province often have to come to Metropolitan Toronto to receive some sophisticated or specialized medical services, or they have other business to do in Toronto. If they are reliant upon their own vehicle, they will find that they are in jeopardy very often if there’s an accident or weather conditions which do not allow them to proceed easily into Toronto. That is why it’s important to have that kind of transportation service coming into our provincial capital and essentially our economic capital here in the province of Ontario.

The fact is that the buses are helpful in that regard, but once the cost of public transportation rises above a certain level, it starts to become uneconomic. With all of the downloading that’s taking place — for instance, I go back to the medical situation. People coming in from the Kitchener-Waterloo area or the St Catharines-Niagara area for some specialized medical services need good public transportation. Again, many of those people are not in the right physical condition or the right health care condition to be able to travel by themselves, and it’s often onerous to ask others to drive them in for those purposes. Parking, of course, is prohibitive in major metropolitan centres in terms of cost.

It seems to me that the Ontario government can play a significant role in transportation services, whether it’s within the regional municipality of Waterloo or the regional municipality of Niagara or the internal cities or towns within that jurisdiction. It seems to me the provincial government can play a role by restoring that

funding. I think it used to be 75%. When I was the chairman of the transit commission back in St Catharines on city council, I think 75% of the capital cost was then paid by the province for new buses and bus terminals and things like that, and approximately 50% of the operating cost.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: You’re going to get some order for me, I know, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Could we just have a little less conversation.

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Mr Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for bringing some order to the House, because I know many members are very interested in the discussion that’s going forward this evening.

You have in your area and we have in our area some hospitals which are able to handle certain circumstances. For instance, in St Catharines we have the Hotel Dieu hospital, which has oncology services — that’s chemotherapy given to people suffering from cancer — a huge and expanding kidney dialysis portion, a palliative care service. It deals with people with autism and it has diabetic services and many other services there. By the way, I should say that I hope those remain at Hotel Dieu hospital and that the provincial government doesn’t accept the recommendation of the hospital destruction commission, under Duncan Sinclair, who had to get private service the other day, to close the Hotel Dieu hospital.

Despite the fact that we have that, there are still going to be occasions when we have to travel to Toronto and other areas, and that’s where I think this board is going to have some potential. It’s often said that people in the opposition tend to be negative. Well, one of the reasons we are is that we know all government members are born with a third hand to pat themselves on the back. We know that if anything is done by the government, there will be a press release from each of the people there. They will gather together at the Albany Club and clink the glasses of champagne and then come out and announce some good news for the province. That’s why we in the opposition tend to be those who will check to see that all is fine with what the government has proposed.

There’s another reason — if you’re ever in opposition, Mr Speaker, you’ll wonder again — and that is that if you say anything good about the government, you end up reading it in print somewhere, like in a Conservative Party pamphlet, or it’s read back to you in the House. It makes you discouraged about offering some positive remarks about what the government is doing.

But I break from that today by saying to the Minister of Municipal Affairs that I think there’s some potential for this board to be able to coordinate those services. I’ve dwelt on transportation services because I think it can apply to my own community, where we’re seeing cutbacks in transportation services within the boundaries of the city of St Catharines. That’s tragic for senior citizens and people of very modest income, for students and others who simply, because of environmental reasons, choose to use

public transportation. I hope the government comes to its senses and restores the funding that used to be there. I hope I don't have to get a letter from GM and Ford and the new Chrysler combination that has been mentioned —

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): DaimlerChrysler.

Mr Bradley: Exactly — as we did with the apprenticeship bill, where the government thought it had all of big business on its side. Sometimes the CAW and the Big Three don't see eye to eye, but there they were, the brothers and the sisters and the company together, standing shoulder to shoulder, saying, "Mike Harris is wrong again." I appreciate those letters coming forward. The Minister of Education was flummoxed when he was confronted with these letters, to say the least. He was sputtering and talking about rhetoric.

I say, as I get into the last minute, that not only can this be a good coordinating body, but perhaps the Minister of Municipal Affairs will be able to persuade the Solicitor General to make certain that the new police officers who were reannounced — I stress reannounced — this week with a good deal of fanfare don't turn out to be of the cardboard variety that we're seeing showing up in Metropolitan Toronto, that they are real, front-line police officers. I met with them, and they were perturbed, as I know you, with your experience, would be perturbed, Mr Speaker, if we don't see that money translated into real officers. We may not see it, because the regional municipalities have so much downloaded on them, so much new responsibility financially, that I just hope they can afford their half of the cost of this grandiose announcement which was made by the Solicitor General and the Premier while there were many police officers in this building.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Applause.

Mr Lessard: I appreciate the applause from the member for Nepean, but I have to let him know that my son isn't watching tonight. He's probably in bed.

I want to thank the member for St Catharines and the member for Kingston and The Islands especially for really impressing upon me the importance of the Greater Toronto Services Board Act for those of us who don't live in the greater Toronto area. Being from Windsor myself, I don't think I'll ever see the GO train extended to Windsor no matter how big Toronto gets. I don't think it's going to get quite that big.

The important provisions of the bill are those dealing with GO Transit, but it fails to prevent urban sprawl around the GTA, which I think is something we all need to be concerned about. It's something we are all concerned about around our own municipalities, because we know there needs to be some government regulation, some government control, to try and prevent the uncontrolled urban sprawl of municipalities. One way that can be done is by ensuring that there is appropriate investment in mass transit, in public transit.

In this bill, an unfair system is going to be locked in place that sees Toronto pay 49% of the cost of subsidizing

the GO Transit service despite the fact that 85% of the riders live in the 905 area. This is not a fair way to deal with this system, and I hope this isn't a pattern that the government intends to establish throughout the province.

Hon Mr Leach: I would like to compliment the remarks that were made by the members for St Catharines, Kingston and The Islands and Scarborough-Agincourt. I'm extremely pleased that, while they're obviously not in favour of every aspect of the bill, they support the principle of the bill and recognize that there is a tremendous need for coordination of service delivery within the greater Toronto area.

I first of all want to reassure the member for St Catharines that the 1,000 policemen that the Solicitor General announced yesterday will be real, live 100% policemen who will be on the streets in the towns and communities of Ontario protecting the citizens. We are quite excited about that, so I just wanted to assure the member of that.

2050

There is one major concern that has been expressed by both opposition parties and that's the funding of GO Transit. I'd just like to point out that the funding allocation for GO Transit allows for changes. The funding allocation is based on one third population, one third service delivery and one third ridership. So as the services change, as the ridership grows in the suburbs or more service is put on or the population changes, then the funding formula will change. That formula now, which is a very fair and equitable formula for everybody involved, happens to assign 49% of the cost to the city of Toronto. That no doubt will change. So we've taken that into consideration.

I think perhaps with that assurance that we might be able to bring both parties on side for this important bill and perhaps get all-party consent, we would move forward very quickly.

Mr Frank Mclash (Kenora): A good number of comments were made by my three colleagues, but I think one that sticks out in my mind from listening to the three of them over the past hour is of course an issue around transportation where they're speaking about public transportation. GO train was mentioned and a number of other avenues of transportation.

I always think about Toronto, a place which I like to refer to as a place that I visit, compared to northern Ontario. When my colleagues were speaking they spoke about great amounts of public transportation that we in northwestern Ontario only dream about.

I have to make the comparison of what we're talking about here in terms of greater Toronto services in the area of transportation to what we face in terms of small-town northwestern Ontario and just remind the members in the House, assuming that it was this government that has not recognized that by ensuring that, northern drivers are going to be paying again their \$37 registration fee to register their vehicles. Again, these are drivers who depend on their vehicles to go large distances, drivers who don't have access to what has been talked about here this

evening in the greater Toronto area when it comes to public transportation.

As well, a good amount was actually talked about in terms of the cutbacks to the regions. We see something similar here in the greater Toronto area that we see throughout the entire province, things such as the \$37 registration fee, the dumping of a fee on the drivers in northwestern Ontario, a lot of things paralleling that happening here in Toronto as well.

Mr Len Wood: I just want to briefly comment on my three friends from the Liberal Party. They raised a lot of issues during their leadoff debate on Bill 56, and some of the concerns that we have in our party as well. For example, the city of Toronto is currently paying 49% of operating costs, despite having only 15% of the riders. That's just one example of how the province, under the Conservative government, has downloaded and dumped on to the municipalities in the greater Toronto area the cost of transportation, which used to be subsidized by taxpayers in general right across the province.

Having lived in northern Ontario, and representing northern Ontario, transportation is a problem. Just within the last two weeks, the government, under the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, decided that two buses travelling from Hearst to Timmins through Kapuskasing and Cochrane were too much and we're going to have to reduce that down to only one bus per day, at the same time, as the member for Kenora pointed out, that they imposed a tax on every person who owns and drives a car — a \$37 tax on their vehicles in northern Ontario, and at the same time cutting off the subsidy that has been paid to keep the public transportation system going.

The whole downloading and dumping that is taking place is because the Conservative government under Mike Harris cannot afford to continue to pay these costs because they're giving away a 30% tax break to the wealthiest 6% of people in this province. It's not right that that should be done.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines for a two-minute response.

Mr Bradley: I will respond on behalf of my two colleagues to the scintillating remarks which I've heard, which are very helpful to me, from the minister and others in the House who have been most helpful in their remarks and right on target as well. I know that all of the members were wondering why in the little period of time I had I didn't mention the advertising campaign this government is embarking upon again.

I can recall when I saw there was a fuse box, I think, and the wires were all crooked and the government was going to fix them up. Of course what happened was they put them together and the Minister of Municipal Affairs was shocked as they hit together in Metro Toronto and other places. Then we saw the one with the Premier saying he was going to fix all this; don't worry, Mike will fix it all.

I think on just the political ads we're now up to — someone will correct me if I'm wrong. These are the blatantly partisan political advertising that we see in the

form of television commercials, radio commercials, full-page ads in the newspapers and these pamphlets that show up at our house once a week. The government must now be spending \$47 million on the propaganda alone. This doesn't include the advertising for jobs within the government, positions within the government, or the advertising for tourism outside the country and so on. If you add that together, the way the government likes to when it's comparing to the opposition, probably the government's over \$100 million.

But I'm just talking about the phony ads, the blatantly political propaganda ads paid for by the taxpayers of this province. I'm waiting for Steven Harper of the National Citizens' Coalition and the Ontario taxpayers coalition to express their outrage at this abuse of public office.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Martin: I'm asking for consent to stand down our leadoff on this bill to another day when our critic can be here.

Interjections: Agreed.

Mr Martin: Thank you very much. I also want to say how much I appreciate the opportunity to speak this evening in this place on this piece of legislation and to share with my colleague from St Catharines my complete and utter dismay at the amount of money that this government is spending on advertising — blatant political advertising. If the amount is \$47 million, it's obscene.

You have to put that in the context of what I think the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party and probably the Conservative Party spent in the last election, all told, on advertising, on leader's tour and on polling — somewhere around, what, \$3 million? This government has already spent in the last few weeks taxpayers' money to advertise its programs to the tune of \$47 million. It's obscene. It's immoral, it's unethical and I, like the member for St Catharines, am amazed that some of these folks who find it important to fight abuse of public money aren't marching the streets, aren't putting billboards up all over Ontario to object to this very wrong expenditure by this government.

Mr Bradley: You mean the tough talk show hosts?

Mr Martin: Yes, exactly, tough talk show hosts challenging this government for this expenditure, which brings me to the bill that we have before us here tonight.

I'm sorry to say to the minister that our caucus will probably at the end of the day not be supporting this piece of legislation. It is just not built on a foundation that we think is supportable and that will produce what all of us I think, by way of coordination of services in this very important piece of Ontario, needs to produce.

First of all, I want to talk about the lack of process, but then again it's not surprising because it's consistent with the way that everything else has been done over the last three years by this government. You have something in mind that you want to do that's usually ideologically driven, it's usually to placate some particular interest groups that have supported you or that have your ear or that is perhaps contributing to the next fundraiser that one member of your caucus is putting on.

2100

I have to wonder about this piece of legislation as well, because there's so much in it that will, at the end of the day go a ways to making sure that in the next election your government does as well as it possibly can in that 905 belt that surrounds Toronto. That's probably about the only place that you're going to get any support at all for your program. So you're going to do all you can to do something that talks about coordinating and co-operation, but not enough to actually do something worthwhile and meaningful for everybody else. That includes, of course, Toronto, which is going to take a beating by way of this bill and its playing out.

We know from some of the study that we've done of some of the pieces of this bill that, for example, Toronto will, at the end of the day, end up paying 49% of the cost of subsidizing GO Transit. We know that GO is important, that train transportation is important, that public transportation is important to Toronto, to Metro and to the greater Toronto area, but this government once again targets Toronto, as it has done consistently over the last three years, in this instance by forcing them to pay 49% of the cost of subsidizing GO, despite the fact that 85% of the riders of that system will come from outside of the Toronto area.

I want to talk a bit about this legislation as very much a piecemeal response to, yes, a very real and important need to coordinate services, as ideologically driven, about re-election in an election which will be coming at us, particularly as we look at the \$47-million advertising campaign that is happening all around us now as we turn the news on at night, as we watch the football game on Sunday afternoon, all of the very expensive time slots that this government is finding money to promote its program in. We know that an election is coming. We know this government is going to play to its strength, the 905 belt, which for the most part got them here in the first place and which they're counting on to continue to keep them in power. However, I believe that at the end of that day there will be another story to be told.

This is ideologically driven. It's about re-election. It's consistent with everything else that the government has done to this time. There really is no planning. There really is no long-term planning and there really is no inclusive, comprehensive planning where it concerns the Greater Toronto Services Board Act.

Just as this government, in its rush to create the new city of Toronto, literally crushed the will of the people of the communities that made up Metro Toronto before that happened; just as this government did not take the time necessary to listen in a fulsome and wholesome way to the views of the people of Toronto as they made some very fundamental and long-ranging decisions, very impactful decisions about how the people of this part of our province would live together, would work together to provide services, to provide for each other, to support each other; just as they didn't take the time to think that piece out, to listen to what people were saying about it, to involve them in some meaningful way in the discussion and then, after

taking the appropriate time, doing, at the end of the day, the right thing, I believe that in this instance they will do the very same thing.

They will put in place a system of government with rules and regulations that will fly in the face of some very obvious and logical approaches. If they had taken the time to actually sit down and listen to people and talk with them and maybe even pilot some things for a time, we might have ended up with something that would be long-serving and that would be most helpful and that would be in keeping with some of the new technologies we have out there, the new information that's available to us, and would recognize that there are some folks working very diligently in local governments out in the GTA who have something very valuable to offer. That, unfortunately, will be missed.

I'm putting on the table here tonight the issue that this government is not considering in any meaningful way, is not, it seems, wanting to take the time that is necessary to do the public consultations and hearings that will be necessary to get all of the proper and valuable information, just as they did in putting together the new city of Toronto. That will, in the end, hurt us.

As I look at this piece of legislation, I can't but help but think that it's being done in a hurry too in that we still haven't come to terms with the real impact of the change that was made re the city of Toronto and the new government that has now been put in place and how it will work to deliver services and collect taxes and pay for the things they are now going to be expected to pay for. When you look at the putting together of the new city of Toronto in such a short period of time, and against the wishes of so many of the people who call that area of our province home, and you look at the impact of the changes that this government has brought about by way of the download, the changing of responsibility for who pays for what services and who delivers what services and how that all meshes together, and the very difficult job that the government of Toronto is having right now — and any of you who want to, from time to time, flick to channel 10 on your television and check out the debate of that particular council — you'll come to understand and to realize the very difficult and awesome job that they have to do to try and put those pieces together, to live up to the commitment of Mayor Lastman, who has said that he is not going to raise taxes, to live up to the responsibility that has been put on their shoulders by this government to now deliver services that it was never imagined, I don't think, in anybody's wildest dreams municipalities would be asked to deliver.

Now, even before that job has begun to, in any meaningful way, roll out, even before we understand in any real and meaningful way how that will all come together and how the new council of Toronto will respond and be able to provide those initial very basic and important services, we're going to put this other layer now in place and keep our fingers crossed and hope that it will all work. I suggest to you that this is problematic, that it will present to those of us who will return after the next

election to be members of this House some very real problems that we will have to revisit and redo.

Then again, as I said before, this is in keeping as well with the way this government operates. We've seen bill after bill presented in this House in a very rushed fashion, without the usual consultation, without the usual input from people, without the time necessary to think out all the ramifications, and then having to return six months or a year later to bring in new legislation to fix some of the problems that the initial legislation created in the first place. I suggest that that's exactly what we will be doing, because the people who should be involved in this process, the people who should be consulted in this process, are right now too busy coming to terms with those very other overwhelming problems and challenges that they've been presented with by the present Ontario government.

2110

That's one piece of this that I wanted to make sure I put on the table tonight by way of observation and challenge and hopefully by way of people out there understanding why it is that we in this caucus will probably not be supporting this piece of legislation at this particular reading as it goes through the House.

The other thing I think we have to understand as well is that this doesn't just concern the delivery of services to the greater Toronto area and doesn't only impact on the new city of Toronto, which is what I've been talking about up to now, and how it's important that we not foist on them any more than they have to deal with at the moment. We should perhaps wait a bit and rethink and work this through some more with them when they're able to get their heads above water to take a deep breath from everything they're involved in right now.

This involves as well an understanding, I think, of how our whole province is going to evolve. It seems to me that the trend so far by this government — and we see this in some very real and meaningful ways, and particularly those of us who come from northern Ontario see this — is to bring everything to Toronto, to see Toronto as the centre of everything that happens and to not worry about what happens beyond its boundaries. We have Toronto and then we have the GTA, and then beyond that nobody in this government seems to really, genuinely and sincerely care what happens.

Mr Len Wood: Written it off.

Mr Martin: They've written it off, exactly.

I suggest that it's important, particularly when we look at a bill such as the Greater Toronto Services Board Act, which will, yes, speak to some need to coordinate some of the services that will be delivered down here, but you can't do anything here that doesn't ultimately, at the end of the day, affect all of the regions and parts of Ontario, because we're connected, we're one province, we're one community of people, when we talk about economic development, when we talk about infrastructure, when we talk about transportation, we have to consider what it is that we want for the whole of the province.

In putting together the Greater Toronto Services Board and responding to some of the needs that we see in the

greater Toronto area, are we considering the possibility that we might return some day to an initiative that was started, yes, by the Liberal government of David Peterson and carried on by the New Democratic government of Bob Rae, which was to diversify, to decentralize, to move some of the government plant out of Toronto and into other important centres across this province?

If you do that, you have to ask then, what does that mean re the level of service that is delivered in the greater Toronto area? How does that impact? What does that call for when we sit down and start to talk about how the regions of the greater Toronto area work together? How do they then at the end of the day work together with cities like Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie and Thunder Bay and Peterborough and Ottawa and Windsor and so on?

I suggest it is important, as we look at this bill and have an opportunity to talk about the infrastructure that's necessary in a community as big as the greater Toronto area, to consider how else we might develop into the future an ability for all the people of Ontario, those people who call other parts of Ontario besides the GTA home, to be an important element of the economy and of the infrastructure that's going to be necessary if we're going to sustain development, if we're going to attract investment, if we're going to be able to live up to some of the commitment we've made by way of our participation in the global community to environmental standards, to standards of health and safety in the workplace, to protecting farmland, to protecting some of those things that we know are essential to vital and viable communities.

If we continue to see Toronto and the greater Toronto area as the only place that's going to grow and develop and prosper, you're going to see other communities, such as my own, Sault Ste Marie, and Sudbury and Thunder Bay and some of those other very important communities, begin to shrink and not live up to the potential that they have to be very important players in the bigger picture of Ontario as it moves forward.

I think it's really important that we put all this in context, that we look at what's happening re the new city of Toronto, on how they're going to deal with some of the new challenges that are presented to them by way of the money they have to spend and the services they have to deliver. I think we have to look at this in terms of the evolution, the development of the whole of the province and what role other parts will play in the further economic development and opportunity for all of us who call Ontario home, and then how that connects to the greater Toronto area and what it is that the greater Toronto area needs to deliver and needs to have and what it is that we can perhaps share with other regions so that we do what's right by way of sustainable development and viable and vital communities.

We'll be asking most particularly re this piece of legislation for further hearings. We'll be asking that this government go the distance in hearing from people, and not only hearing from people in the GTA but hearing from people across this province re what it is they think the

GTA should look like and what it is they should have to service their people and how that impacts on those who live someplace else. Thank you very much, Speaker, for this opportunity this evening.

The Acting Speaker: I'd like to take a moment and beg the indulgence of the House to introduce a group from Cambridge, the riding of Mr Gerry Martiniuk, and the honourable former member who's here from Cambridge. The delegations are on a tour of the Legislature. Welcome. Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: I'd like to respond to the member for Sault St Marie. I must say that I was extremely disappointed that the member doesn't recognize the need to coordinate the services within the greater Toronto area and indicated that his party may not support the bill. That's extremely disappointing, because I think just about everybody in the greater Toronto area recognizes the important need to coordinate those services.

They talked about not consulting with the people. In 1996 there was a major report completed by Anne Golden that was started by the NDP government. In 1997 David Crombie did a follow-up report, followed again by another report by Milt Farrow, looking in and consulting all the way along. Only then did we draft the legislation. Did we introduce the legislation? No, we sent it out for more consultation with Alan Tonks, who took it to every municipality and every stakeholder in the greater Toronto area. Only when we had that input did we introduce it for first reading. Did we rush after first reading? No, we did not. We sent the bill out for further consultation from June of this year until this day. I don't think there is a piece of legislation that has been before this House in this session by this government that has had as much consultation as the greater Toronto Services Board bill. We have talked to every stakeholder, every municipality, every head of council. We've met with every council. We have had public meetings.

Everybody in this greater Toronto area recognizes the need for coordination of services across the greater Toronto area. This is the first step to achieve that. I know that the Liberals, to their credit, recognize the need for that and have indicated that they would probably support the bill. I would hope the NDP would be as insightful.

2120

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I profess no expertise on these matters and my friend from Scarborough and others have spoken to it with far greater authority than I expect to. But I do want to make one observation: that for the better part of a quarter of century I've driven in and around this metropolitan community and in recent times I have become increasingly concerned by the absolute horrific gridlock that one encounters from Oshawa in the east to Burlington in the west.

In recent weeks I've had the opportunity to find myself in a car in busy times driving around Washington and Boston. I was struck by the fact that my weekly drive in and out of Toronto was as bad or worse than the Beltway at rush hour.

We have a problem; we have a very real and serious problem. I'm quite prepared to support this bill if somebody can give me this assurance: Will I live long enough in this province and in and around this city to experience a time when I can actually get on a rail transport in downtown Toronto that will take me to the Toronto international airport, which is currently on site at what we call the Pearson complex in the Malton area?

We've got lots of studies and we've got lots of planners, and I know most of them and they're all good people. Whether it's Alan Tonks or Don Cousens who takes over this services board — and no greater and more active campaign is to be imagined than the one that Tonks and Cousens are apparently now engaged in for the chairmanship of this services board. They're good people; I know them both. I just hope that I live long enough to see the day when Toronto and area will have advanced to that state of modernity where a citizen will actually be able to get on some form of rail transport in the interior of the city and travel to the metropolitan airport without having to face the gridlock that we do on so many occasions today.

Mr Lessard: The member from Renfrew makes a good point about transit services being available to the Toronto airport. I know a number of members in this place who travel to the airport and back on a weekly basis. Multiply that by the number of people in various government departments who have to go back and forth to the airport. I think that probably results in a parade of taxis and other vehicles going back and forth to the airport, just as a result of the business that we do here and that would relieve congestion on the 427 if we were to have that service available just for this place.

My friend from Sault Ste Marie has once again indicated how this bill that we're debating with respect to the Greater Toronto Services Board is really something of importance to many of us in Ontario, no matter where we may live. It is important that we ensure that transportation in our provincial capital runs smoothly and that there is a commitment to ensure that public transit continues to play the important role that it is required to do here. That's good not only for speed of access in and out of this city, but also to enhance protection of the environment as well. We need to do what we can to encourage people to take public transit. I see what's happening in this bill as perhaps leading to a deterioration of that service and leading to greater urban sprawl as well.

As well, my friend mentioned the amount of money that's being spent by this government on advertising. I suspect that there will be an advertising campaign on this bill as well. We'll be looking forward to seeing that in our mailboxes soon.

Mr Carroll: It's a pleasure to make some comments on the speech of the member for Sault Ste Marie. There's one thing I want to take a little exception with. He made the comment that nobody in this government cares about the rest of the province outside the GTA. I would like him to know that more than half of our members, including our Premier, represent areas of this province outside the GTA. Quite frankly, we represent them very well and they are

very important to us. So please don't try to assume that because we're passing a bill that has to do with the GTA that we don't have an interest outside of that.

I've had the opportunity to live in different parts of the GTA. I went to university here in the city of Toronto. I lived in Oshawa. I met my wife out there, actually, and got married and lived in Brampton for a while. It's a great part of the province. Next to that part of the province that is west of London, it's the greatest part of the province. I still would prefer the great southwest, as Mr Lessard I'm sure would agree, but next to that it's a great part of this province.

However, it does need some coordination. If we are going to provide to the citizens of the GTA the best services at the best price, we need some coordination, not just in transportation. We need it in all areas. It's really surprising that the New Democrats would come out and say they're not going to support this bill.

Having lived around here — all of us have lived here some part of the last three and a half years, some people longer than that — we understand the need for coordination of all the things that happen in this great part of the province. So if the bill passes, and we hope that it will — obviously the Liberals are on side; at least so far they are. We'll see what happens when the vote comes. The New Democrats are not but we can probably carry the bill without them. The GTA needs it to provide the best service at the best price. It's a good piece of legislation. Hopefully all in the House will be able to support it.

Mr Martin: I thank the member for Windsor-Riverside, the minister from St George-St David, the member for Renfrew North and the member for Chatham-Kent.

The minister says there has been sufficient consultation. A lot of that consultation, Minister, was based on a different premise. It was based on a model that saw the lower level of government staying in place and your government, your Premier, your leader, committed to that, and then a larger GTA that would coordinate services. That's not what we have now. We have a completely different picture. So that's why we're concerned that you haven't done the consultation in light of the new reality that we have in front of us.

On one hand, you've got Toronto, which is struggling with a challenge that I don't know how they're going to get themselves out from under, and you're going to stiff them even more with this bill by expecting that they will pay 49%, for example, of the subsidizing of GO, when 85% of the riders live outside of the Toronto area.

The member for Renfrew North spoke about a problem of traffic and transportation. That's only one of a whole whack of problems that we're beginning to see more and more of in Toronto now as it expands and as urban sprawl takes hold.

I suggest to you that if we do a wider study, if we think about this in the context of the whole of the province and how other areas can help the area of Toronto in terms of development and growth and taking some of the opportunity out there, we will end up with a better system of coordination and cooperation in the GTA. All I'm asking you and your government, Minister, is to take the time to do that, to have some hearings and hear from the people.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2129.

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Thursday 26 November 1998

Jeudi 26 novembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 November 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 novembre 1998

The House met at 1002.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MENTAL HEALTH AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Mr Patten moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 78, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act / Pro-
jet de loi 78, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): The
member for Ottawa Centre has 10 minutes.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I am pleased
today to speak to Bill 78. The purpose of the bill is to
facilitate the admission of a person to a psychiatric facility
for assessment, to deal with people who are caught in a
revolving-door syndrome, in and out hospital, never ade-
quately treated. A person who suffers from such a mental
disorder may be admitted to a psychiatric facility on an
involuntary basis if his or her substitute decision-maker
consents to the admission.

The bill also provides for patients to be allowed to live
outside of the psychiatric facility under a leave agreement,
sometimes referred to as a community treatment order.

My bill is based on the following principles:

Persons who suffer from severe mental illness such as
schizophrenia should have the right to access the medical
treatment they require as early in the course of their illness
as possible.

Treatment should occur in the least restrictive environ-
ment possible.

Treatment should also be tailored to the needs of the
individual.

There remains a need for involuntary hospitalization
because of the reality of severe mental disorder.

Everyone requiring treatment in the absence of their
consent does not need to be detained in a hospital in order
to receive such treatment.

Bill 78 is an improvement in two ways on my original
Bill 111, which was passed on second reading but died on
the order paper. The first is the addition of a fourth crite-
rion for involuntary admission, which is only done by a
physician, for psychiatric assessment. The second is the
addition of a leave agreement. The bill will still remove
the words "imminent and" from serious impairment of the

person, as did Bill 111. The widely acknowledged prob-
lem with the word "imminent" is its narrow and varied
interpretations, causing difficulty.

Since introducing my first bill, many things have hap-
pened that have reinforced my intention to reintroduce a
strengthened bill. These are:

(1) Meetings that I have had with several organiz-
ations, groups and individuals, including representatives of
the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario as the core group.

(2) The recommendations of two inquests that I testi-
fied at, the Brian Smith inquest in Ottawa and the Koval-
skyj-England inquest in Ajax, both of which supported my
bill and also recommended a community treatment provi-
sion in the act.

(3) New research available, particularly confirming the
importance of early detection and intervention, and
research on new pharmacological therapies.

(4) The closure of psychiatric beds and the rationaliz-
ing of mental health services as a result of the report of the
health restructuring commission.

(5) The publicity surrounding the recent Edmond Yu
inquest, which brought to light that the severely mentally
ill risk being the victims of violent death by police. In
Toronto, five mentally ill patients were shot and killed by
police between the years 1988 and 1997.

I am mindful of the consultative review undertaken by
Dan Newman, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister
of Health, and the recommendations therein, which
include a complete review of the Mental Health Act and
related legislation by the government. Unfortunately, the
severely mentally ill, who are subjected to the revolving-
door syndrome, and their loved ones cannot wait for a
comprehensive review of the act. Individuals with serious
and chronic mental illness acting in a dangerous manner
after not getting their treatment needs met are dying by
their own hands, or sometimes by the hands of others, as
in the case of Edmond Yu, 35, shot by police. Many others
are involved in incidents of illness-driven violence. Recent
cases include:

Alistair Deighton Jr, shot and killed by his mentally ill
father, January 1995.

Brian Smith, popular CJOH sportscaster, gunned down
August 1, 1995, in Ottawa.

Jennifer Kovalskyj-England, age 6, stabbed 69 times
by her stepfather, April 2, 1996, Bowmanville.

Marian Johnston, Jennifer's grandmother, stabbed 34
times by her son and Jennifer's father, April 2, 1996,
Bowmanville.

Mona Hamilton, an elderly woman, stabbed outside a downtown bus stop in Ottawa in July 1996.

I can go on and on. This list is not exhaustive but serves to illustrate recent cases that were subject to a lot of media attention.

Families often carry the burden of care, trying to protect their adult offspring. They live under tremendous stress, sometimes involving potentially violent situations when the options for accessing care are limited when the person does not believe they are ill and refuses treatment.

I would like to read part of a letter to me from Dr Heather Milliken, a psychiatrist with 18 years of clinical practice providing care to individuals with schizophrenia and their families.

"It is now recognized based on neuropsychological research that schizophrenia is an illness which can cause significant cognitive impairment. In particular, insight and judgment can be severely impaired. Amador in the United States conducted a study which found that almost 50% of patients suffering from schizophrenia did not acknowledge having any kind of mental disorder. This lack of awareness of suffering from a mental disorder is not merely psychological denial but rather is felt to reflect underlying disturbances in brain function. What this means, however, is that individuals — because they do not appreciate or acknowledge having an illness — do not seek nor do they accept treatment voluntarily....

"For the majority of patients it has been shown that each recurrent episode has a characteristic 'signature,' ie, the progression of signs and symptoms follows a similar pattern each time. It is therefore possible to predict for those who know the patient well, ie, family members and their treatment team, the pattern of physical or mental deterioration that will occur.

1010

I am told that the newer anti-psychotic drugs on the market that are more expensive but have reduced side effects are not yet part of the provincial government formulary unless older drugs have been tried first. I ask you, are migraine sufferers forced to use older drugs before they can access the newer, more effective ones? We must have the highest quality and best use of medication. Not only is it inhuman, but it also creates a false economy. Patients discarding unpleasant, older medicines and repeating the cycle all over again end up being far more costly than the newer in the end.

With the coming trend towards outpatient and community psychiatric care, four other provinces already have established community treatment and a fifth is in the process of establishing it.

On June 3, the Minister of Health announced \$60 million for expanding mental health services and the launch of a review of the mental health legislation. Media reports indicate that to date only \$20 million has so far been allocated. We need the full allocation now and about five times that amount over the long haul.

As human rights critic for my party, I'd like to comment briefly on the right to refuse treatment and individual and public safety. We have a system that gives patients

the right to treatment, but patients also have the right to refuse treatment. This is the rub. Many people who have a severe mental illness refuse treatment because they don't believe they are ill. The cost of withholding treatment, however, is often permanent damage. Medication can often free victims from their illness and restore their dignity, their free will and the meaningful exercise of their liberties.

I would like to quote from Hershel Hardin, former director of the BC Civil Liberties Association and active with Amnesty International in defence of liberty and free speech. He says:

"More and more people are showing up in the streets in need of help. Incidents of 'illness-driven violence' are reported regularly. People ask, 'Why don't we provide help and treatment when the need is so obvious?' Every cry of anguish is answered by, 'Unrequested intervention is an infringement of civil liberties.' This stops everything. The rhetoric and the lobbying results in legislative obstacles to timely and adequate treatment. The psychiatric community is cowed by the anti-treatment climate. Far from respecting civil liberties, legal obstacles to treatment limit or destroy the liberty of the person."

I'm very aware of the charter protection rights such as the right to liberty, the right not to be detained arbitrarily and the right to security of the person. Limits on charter-protected rights must be clearly justifiable. It is important to recognize that persons have the right to be treated by the health care system especially if they are not capable of making that decision for themselves. My bill is for this very small group of people with very restricted criteria who have fallen through the cracks.

I believe people have a right to be healthy. We have an obligation to help severely mentally ill persons and their families access medical care when they need it. I don't see this as a partisan issue. As Selina Volpatti, president of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario said, "This is not a political issue; it is a health issue and an issue of saving lives."

I'd like to read part of a letter from a constituent:

"I am 54 years old and this is the first time in my life that I write to a politician to ask for action. I am the mother of a 23-year-old bright, lively, wonderful son who saw his world collapse with schizophrenia two years ago.

"My son has required three hospitalizations in 15 months. His last hospitalization followed a failed suicide attempt. My numerous discussions with the dedicated doctors and nurses in psychiatric care as well as my first-hand experience with my own son make me realize that the Mental Health Act in its present form is not protecting the ill person against their own illness."

I would also like to point out that I have a letter here from Michael and Maureen Cassidy. Michael, a former leader of the NDP party, is asking all members to support Bill 78 "when it comes to second reading vote under private members' business in the Legislature this Thursday. Although this bill was prepared by Richard Patten, a Liberal MPP, I believe it contains long-needed changes to

the way Ontario law treats people with serious mental illness, and deserves support from MPPs of all parties.”

Time is running out; I have much more to say and my colleagues will join in the debate. I welcome the opportunity to listen to my colleagues in this House and their points of view on the importance of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Nice to see you in the chair this morning, Mr Speaker. Let me say at the outset, to be clear, I am not supporting this bill this morning. I think all of the members in the House have agonized to some extent over this bill because of the conflicting interests that we have to consider.

I've talked to a variety of people to try to come to my own conclusion about where I stand. I have notes here from the Queen Street Patients Council, and I'm sure that the member for Ottawa Centre has seen or talked to some of the people who are advocates for the mentally ill about their views on this. Perhaps later when he speaks he can clarify this. But I'm hearing time and time again that the Mental Health Act already allows for people, as the member for Ottawa Centre says, the very small percentage of people who could be considered dangerous to themselves or to their families, to society, the Mental Health Act already has that ability. The problem is that most people, including the majority of doctors, don't understand this, don't know the Mental Health Act well enough, and society as a whole doesn't know that that power is already there.

It occurs to me that if that's the case, what we're doing here, if this bill is allowed to pass, is opening up the door to forced treatments, to forced hospitalization and the so-called leash treatment on people who might not or should not be considered within this category. I know, for instance, that here within the Toronto area over the years the homeless community — I find this a bit of a parody of words — has been growing. Some people like to say that people are on the street because they're mentally ill and they're getting kicked out or can't maintain a home or whatever. In fact, the evidence shows that it's the other way around.

What I'm really worried about here is that we're taking the approach that what we have to do is go out — because we're not, as a society, providing the kinds of support that people need to help them stay healthy, and they have been deteriorating over the past few years, as we well know, especially in terms of housing, but in terms of other services they need as well. There's all kinds of evidence which shows that many people who end up on the street and stay on the street are there because of housing crises, because they can't get a job, because the supports aren't there. If the supports were there to help them, they would be in at least reasonable health.

A lot of the people on the streets, because they don't have those supports or they've been ripped out from under them and they have nowhere to turn — if you don't have a home to live in, a roof over your head, a way to make a living, if you're not a part of a community, then of course I would say that you're going to get sicker and sicker.

We know that there's evidence, and I know Mr Patten mentioned, that there are new drugs and those drugs should be made far more accessible than they are, but they have horrific side effects. I know the mother of a young schizophrenic man. I know and have seen the results, the horrible side effects from some of those drugs. You've got to think, when you see those side effects sometimes, which is worse? I would say that based on my experience with this young man he's not a danger to society.

It's true, as Mr Patten said, that most psychiatric survivors and people who are mentally ill are not a danger. It's very difficult in many cases for scientists and doctors to figure out who's a danger or not, but in some categories and some cases, yes. Parents with adult schizophrenic children and other children with mental illnesses — I know that there are cases where parents are having very difficult times. I acknowledge that. It seems to me, though — and if there's dispute about this I'd like to hear it — that those powers for those people already exist.

1020

I am very worried that what we're doing here today is opening up the door for the power of the state to go out and start rounding up people who are not dangerous, who are in dire straits, and instead of as a society giving them the supports they need, we take this very punitive approach, where we start forcing drugs on their bodies, we start taking away their freedom, which I believe is a human right.

What I would like to see us as a Legislature doing is looking at the Mental Health Act. I've talked to the Queen Street Patients Council and others. If those conditions already exist under the Mental Health Act, why aren't we just making sure doctors understand them, that they're being used properly and that the people who really need this what I consider very draconian approach to their illness — I would agree and we all would agree that sometimes in order to protect people, to protect families, to protect communities, there may need to be, in some cases, draconian measures, but if that's already within the Mental Health Act, why in heaven's name are we doing this today?

I would suggest to the member that the most positive route to take today is to look at the kind of support systems that have been ripped out from under people, to look at homelessness and to urge the present government to get back into providing affordable housing, providing housing for the mentally ill. Rooming houses, for instance, where a lot of mentally ill psychiatric survivors live, are not regulated in any way. We hear horrific stories of what happens to people in some of these houses. In fact they prefer, in some cases, to end up on the street.

As I said, I am not supporting this bill. I look forward to the comments from other people and I look forward to Mr Patten's response to the very strong suggestion, very strong statement that the power in the bill he's putting forward today already exists and that this is unnecessary and is a very dangerous step we're taking, if we pass this, in terms of impinging on a lot of people's human rights.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It's certainly my pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 78. I'd like to begin by commending the member for Ottawa Centre for his ongoing dedication and commitment to the issues of mental health. His efforts have once again brought us to this Legislative Assembly to discuss and debate amendments to the Mental Health Act.

There are several important issues that the member for Ottawa Centre has recognized and included in Bill 78 that I would like to acknowledge today. For example, Bill 78 attempts to rectify the misunderstandings of the term "imminent" in several sections of the current Mental Health Act; Bill 78 re-examines the criteria for involuntary psychiatric assessment and admission to psychiatric facilities; and last, Bill 78 examines the need to develop effective alternatives to involuntary hospitalization.

Overall, Bill 78 is an improvement from the member's previous bill, Bill 111. However, this bill is not consistent with our government's current mental health reform strategy. Earlier this year the Minister of Health, the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, asked me to conduct a comprehensive review of the mental health system in Ontario. I met with stakeholders and received feedback on what was and what was not working in Ontario's mental health system.

In my review, a number of common themes emerged that I thought our government must address to reform the mental health system in Ontario. In these themes, I identified several key issues that became the basis for my recommendations to Minister Witmer. What I did not hear during my consultations was, "If you amend the Mental Health Act, everything will be fine." I didn't hear that once.

What I did hear was that a reform of the mental health system in Ontario must ensure that individuals with a serious mental illness have access to a broad range of services and supports that are appropriate to their specific condition and level of need. I also heard that mental health legislation should not only reflect the needs of the individuals, but also reflect the goals of the system.

That is why I recommended that our government create an integrated and coordinated system of mental health services that will provide a continuum of care for those with serious mental illness.

That is why I recommended that our government should (1) create an integrated and coordinated system, (2) ensure dedicated funding for the mental health system and (3) immediately begin an aggressive education campaign aimed at clarifying the intent and application of the Mental Health Act and related legislation.

More specifically, that is why I recommended that our government immediately begin a review of the Mental Health Act and related legislation and that any changes to the legislation must reflect the following fundamental principles: that legislation supports our government's creation of an integrated and coordinated mental health system capable of providing a continuum of care from prevention to in-hospital and community-based treatment; that legislation allows those who need mental health

services in Ontario to access those services where and when they need them; and that legislation ensures public safety.

These recommendations have become fundamental in the development of a reform plan to improve the coordination, responsiveness and accessibility of mental health services throughout Ontario.

Unfortunately, Bill 78 is not consistent with our government's current mental health reform strategy. There is a need in Ontario for a strong legislative framework that will move mental health reform forward, and Bill 78 is not quite enough.

As I mentioned earlier, this bill raises a number of important issues. However, Bill 78 is too narrow in its focus of involuntary assessment and admission to psychiatric facilities and compulsory treatment, and it does not address mental health service delivery and access to service issues.

The community treatment proposal in Bill 78 does not address access to mental health services and supports. Legislation and accessible community supports go hand in hand.

Finally, Bill 78 uses vague and unexplained language such as "medical treatment" and "serious deterioration" that will lead to confusion and inconsistencies in the interpretation and application of the act and will lead to possible legal challenges.

These are critical points with respect to mental health legislation, but they are not addressed in Bill 78.

Our government recognizes the need for a strong legislative framework that is consistent with mental health reform. In fact, so do our stakeholders. This past Tuesday, I had the opportunity to meet with the Provincial Advisory Committee on Mental Health. They told me unequivocally that it is crucial to stay on course with the current plan for mental health reform. More specifically, they emphasized the importance of fulfilling our promise to conduct a comprehensive review of all mental health legislation and not to get bogged down with the first or second proposal that came along.

As a result, our government has taken several necessary steps that will ensure that mental health services are provided in a manner that is supported by a strong legislative framework. For example, Minister Witmer announced that \$60 million would be allocated to enhance access to mental health services across the province. I'm pleased to say that \$31.1 million of that is being spent to increase community-based mental health services across our province.

An important initiative is currently underway, and that's an extensive education program designed to inform mental health professionals, criminal justice officials, consumers and families about current mental health legislation. This campaign will provide important feedback for our government on the existing Mental Health Act and areas which may need to be revised. This campaign is being led by Michael Bay, the chair of the Consent and Capacity Board.

Lastly, our government has developed an implementation plan for mental health reform that outlines a mental health strategy for this province. These initiatives are fundamental to mental health reform. More important, they illustrate the necessary steps that must be taken to ensure that legislation is indeed consistent with reform. Bill 78 is not consistent with current mental health reform, and I will not be supporting it.

1030

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 78, and I want to applaud my colleague for his continuing sensitivity to these important issues.

I don't want to use a lot of time today; I do want to address a couple of issues that have been raised. First of all, I will be supporting this bill. I get concerned when I hear the kind of language of debate that I heard from the member for Riverdale. This bill is not about leashing people; it's not about putting them away. This bill is about access to treatment; it's about how people who suffer very seriously have difficulties accessing treatment.

I'd like to read a quote from Dr Heather Milliken, the associate professor and director of continuing education in the department of psychiatry at Dalhousie University. She says:

"The proposed amendments to the Ontario mental health legislation are consistent with changes occurring throughout America. This does not represent, as some might argue, a retrogressive step backwards to the era of asylums, but rather represents a step towards ensuring that individuals who suffer from brain disorders such as schizophrenia and manic-depressive illness who as a result of the nature of their disorder are in certain cases unable to recognize they are ill and who therefore fail to access treatment are provided access to treatments which are effective and which they have a right to receive. Even with the proposed amendments, the Ontario Mental Health Act will continue to have narrower criteria for involuntary admission than other provinces."

What that says is that this is a question of the right of a person to treatment. It says that even with these amendments Ontario will still have a narrow definition of when somebody can be admitted involuntarily.

For nine years prior to being elected to the Legislative Assembly, I was the administrator of an alcohol and drug recovery program in Windsor called Brentwood. Every day on an ongoing basis we saw at our front door people who could not access treatment, who didn't know they were sick, who weren't on their meds. This is a result of years and years of deinstitutionalization, of failing to provide. The parliamentary assistant to the minister spoke about consultations and about this and about that. The reality is, more people are on the street sicker who are not able to recognize they need treatment or can't simply access it. We saw it every day at Brentwood.

This is a responsible approach to a difficult question that will leave Ontario with a well-defined methodology for dealing with these issues that does not, in my view, unfairly prejudice the rights of those who are stricken by

these unfortunate situations. I support this bill. I challenge the government to quit talking about reforms and consultations and changes, when they in fact haven't done anything, and support this bill, which is well defined, which leaves us with a narrower interpretation than most other provinces but still affords those who need it access to treatment in a fair and responsible fashion.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I just want to begin by saying that I have no doubt that the intentions of the member who introduced Bill 78, the member for Ottawa Centre, are based on good motives and a desire to protect people. I'm assuming the member for Windsor-Walkerville feels the same. He said he's concerned about what the member for Riverdale said and that this bill is not about putting people away but is about access to treatment and all that. I'm not sure that he might be fully aware necessarily of what is contained in the bill, but I'm not sure that's entirely it.

While I have no doubt, again, about the intentions, when I listen to people from Queen Street Patients Council and the mental health legal committee and others, I do have serious concerns about the potential effects of Bill 78 on consumers themselves, on people who suffer mental illness. There's no doubt that the families of people who suffer mental illness feel strongly about needing to find better and greater supports and solutions to the problems their family members might be having. There's no doubt about that at all.

I must tell you I am lucky enough not to have had this problem in my own family or extended family. That doesn't mean that we're insensitive to the rights of those individuals and to the rights of the general public in terms of the effects that they might have on themselves and the public, but we have to balance out rights for individuals who suffer mental illness with the rights of the public and, to a great extent, the rights of families as well. We do. Whether Bill 78 is that bill, I'm not entirely certain.

Queen Street Patients Council says, "It's shocking that Ontario doctors are so ignorant of the law that they lobby for powers that already exist." Is that true or not? I'm not entirely sure of that except that the mental health legal committee argues that these laws already exist in law, and do we need additional language that simply would widen the criteria for involuntary admission of individuals with mental illness to a psychiatric facility? I don't believe we do.

While I agree with the member for Scarborough Centre that the language that is proposed in this bill could lead to legal challenges, as some of them propose, and while I agree that the language is somewhat vague, I'm not entirely sure about what they are about to propose or could propose by way of changes to the Mental Health Act. I am worried about what they have done in the past and worried about what they might introduce. So while I am in some agreement with what the member said, I worry about the changes they're likely to introduce themselves.

Part of the problem is that in Ontario we've had a few cases of violence by disturbed people and they have of course resulted in tremendous publicity, no doubt about

that, leading a whole lot of politicians and members of the public to wonder whether or not existing laws are in place and/or existing supports are in place to protect them from themselves and from the general public. I read an interesting statistic, again given by the Queen Street Patients Council, that says, "In truth almost all crime, about 96%, is committed by 'sane' people."

When we listen to some of the stories in the media of problems committed by those who suffer mental illness, they create the impression that there's a whole lot of crime committed by them, and that unduly discriminates against individuals who suffer mental illness. There is no doubt in my mind about that. What we need to do, and what the mental health legal committee recommends, is that we apply the law as it exists and apply it correctly, and make sure that people advocating for change understand what is currently in law before they propose criteria that expand the powers of certain individuals to put away those who suffer from mental illness and force them to take medication that some of them do not want to take.

The member for Riverdale pointed out that the side effects of some of these drugs are egregious. I read a whole page of side effects that some of these drugs have on individuals and, in my view, they are horrific. I've never had to take them, so I wouldn't know. But you have to take guidance from consumer-survivors who have gone through it and talk to us about some of the problems these drugs have had on their lives. Many of them argue that the side effects of these drugs have made their problems worse, not better. Who do we take guidance from? Yes, from consumer-survivors, and yes, to a great extent from those who treat them. It's a question of finding the appropriate balance.

What we desperately need is to deal with an underfunded in-patient mental health system, similarly engaging the individual in consensual care where the individual requires and requests this, and providing housing, employment and other income maintenance and support to allow for a comfortable quality of life for the individual. Those supports are desperately lacking, and unless we deal with that, we focus on how we can put these people away for their own good and for the good of the general public, and I believe that's wrong.

I won't be supporting Bill 78.

1040

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): First, I'd like to commend the member for Ottawa Centre for his concern and for bringing his concern forward in this particular bill, Bill 78. I can't exactly agree with it, but I agree with the concerns he has for mental health here in the province.

Too often we take for granted our health, whether it be mental health or other aspects of our health. Maybe it's related to my age, but I seem to be running into an awful lot of people my age who have children in their twenties who are schizophrenic, and as you hear their stories and tales you empathize with them. It's a kind of cross to bear that most of us shouldn't have to carry.

There have been tremendous advances in therapies in the last few decades to help people with mental illness to

lead productive lives. Yes, I'm hearing and I'm aware that there are some side effects, but many of these pharmaceutical preparations help these people tremendously.

There's no question that the government is committed to a strong legislative framework that will protect the mentally ill. The changes that we make as we move along should be consistent with some of the government's direction, and Bill 78 isn't exactly consistent with the directions we're currently going in.

There's no question that people with mental illness need to have access to services. That's unquestionable. They need the supports in the community and they also need to be left with some individual choice and not always be caught in a corner.

To accomplish this, the minister has directed staff in the Ministry of Health to review the Mental Health Act and to look at the related legislation to ensure that there will be an integrated and coordinated system to provide for these patients so that they will have a seamless continuum of care.

Also, they're developing an implementation plan for mental health.

There's an educational campaign for mental health that's tremendously important, and also through this to have a very strong feedback mechanism.

The ministry and the minister are taking steps to ensure that these things happen, particularly the seamless continuum of care for the mentally ill.

I'm very pleased to comment that the parliamentary assistant, Mr Newman from Scarborough Centre, has gone out and there's been extensive consultation for mental health throughout the province. A reference was made a few minutes ago that consultation was needed, that there was a lack of consultation. That certainly is not true. Mr Newman has been out with extensive consultation throughout the province.

I commend the member for his concerns and bringing this forward, but I for one will not be able to support it.

Just in winding up, to leave a bit of time for my good friend Mr Klees, who will be speaking later, I'll draw a quick comparison. In the bill that was brought in by Mr Wildman, the member for Algoma and previous Minister of Environment, he wanted increased penalties for improper handling of waste. The idea was good, but it's only part of what needs to be done; it's only part of the overall plan. You will note that just on Monday the minister, the Honourable Norm Sterling, brought in Bill 82, which is all-inclusive. It will cover the total Environmental Protection Act. It will deal with the Pesticides Act and also the Ontario Water Resources Act. This is looking at it as an umbrella and covering all aspects of increased penalties and giving priorities to the importance of the environment; similarly with mental health, as I look at this Bill 78.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Although I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on Bill 78, my colleague from Ottawa Centre's Act to amend the Mental Health Act, I must say to all the members of this

Legislature that I've had much difficulty in determining how I would vote on this particular piece of legislation.

Since first being elected in 1995, I've been humbled by the fact that we as legislators are continually asked to rise in this House and vote on legislation that can have and has had a dramatic impact on real people all across the province. In some instances, I will admit that I've cast my vote with mixed feelings, without 100% assurance within myself that the legislation we are pondering is absolutely good or absolutely bad.

My rule of thumb has been and will be to consider, how will the legislation affect the people I represent? Will it improve their lives? Is it legislation that has long-term value? Is it legislation that takes into consideration the best interests of us as individuals and as members of our society?

However, I will further admit that this particular government's legislative agenda has made this responsibility generally somewhat easier. Much of what the government has done I vigorously oppose, as the litmus test I've applied has come out strongly on the negative side.

Today the task is not nearly so clear or so simple. Mind you, I do not question the sincerity or the care with which my colleague has put together his private member's bill. Indeed, I applaud him for the tremendous courage he has shown by enabling this opportunity for debate on such a serious matter. I know my colleague has consulted widely, and he is probably more conscious than anyone of the potential ramifications of his legislation should it be passed, implemented and then become law.

Any legislation that compels individuals in our society to, in this case, potentially receive treatment against their will, must give us pause. The mere possibility that this tool could be used inappropriately or be seen as a quick fix is, I believe, a real concern. However, upon careful and somewhat painful reflection, I've come to the conclusion that Mr Patten's bill is worthy of support.

The fact is, we live in a society where the needs of the mentally ill are not considered a priority. I've spoken on many occasions in the Legislature about the mistreatment of people who suffer from mental illnesses and about how the government, in its headlong rush to restructure the health care system, has created a very real and a very immediate crisis in mental health care; about the horrific fact that 10% of the inmates at district jails in my part of the province are people who need psychiatric care, not incarceration; about the fact that community support and all that entails is the key to helping people avoid the revolving door syndrome or frequent readmissions to hospitals or, indeed, prisons; and the fact that this government has failed miserably to ensure that community supports are in place before they have, for example, cut psychiatric beds.

I believe that more than ever, and I further believe that Bill 78, if it is accompanied by a comprehensive package of community-based treatment and support services, could be helpful to individuals suffering from mental illness, to the members of their families who see the suffering firsthand, and to society as a whole.

We've heard and read about many tragedies that might have been avoided if proper treatment had been taking place. If this legislation passes, with its clear intention to see that persons who suffer from severe mental illness have the right to access the medical treatment they require as early as possible and in the least restrictive environment possible, there may be future tragedies avoided.

There are still risks involved in taking the course of action prescribed by this legislation. I am pleased that my colleague has tailored this bill to reflect those concerns. Bill 78 makes it clear that treatment should be tailored to the needs of each individual. While involuntary hospitalization may be occasionally necessary, he has also made it clear that everyone requiring treatment does not need to be detained in a hospital in order to receive that treatment.

Regardless, there are still risks attached to the legislation, and legislation as sensitive as this. Therefore, I believe that any concerns we have about a potential misuse or overuse of this mandatory treatment must be accompanied by implementing needed safeguards and by ensuring that any orders are monitored closely, including more frequent mandatory review board decisions.

This legislation tackles a very difficult problem and does it in a manner that deserves our gratitude for the sensitivity with which it has been dealt. It is a question of balance, and it is one that I believe my colleague from Ottawa Centre has dealt with and managed in an extremely sensitive manner.

I will be supporting Bill 78 today.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I am pleased to rise today. I want to say at the outset that I congratulate the member for Ottawa Centre for bringing this very sensitive piece of legislation forward for debate this morning. I also want to say that I will be supporting this bill.

I have some reservations and there are some concerns, as have been expressed by other members of this House, over some of the terminology, the vagueness of some of the terms. I believe that the place for us to have this debate, in terms of refining this legislation, is in committee. I would very much like to see this bill be referred to a committee to debate not only this bill, but the whole issue of the importance of how we as a province and how we as a society deal with this important issue of mental health.

1050

I believe that my colleague from Scarborough Centre has done an outstanding job in terms of consultations over the last number of months around this important issue. We've seen some significant improvements already in a number of areas of reinvestments on the part of the Ministry of Health. However, I want also to be very clear that I believe we have yet some distance to go in order to ensure that people in our society who suffer mental illness are dealt with adequately.

It's important for us as legislators to note that many precautions have been taken in this piece of legislation to ensure that people are dealt with in a compassionate and reasonable way. The legislation clearly states that the person must previously have received medical treatment

for a mental disorder and responded well to those treatments. It goes on to say that the attending physician is of the opinion that the person is suffering from the same mental disorder as the one for which he or she previously received medical treatment, and that the person is likely to suffer serious deterioration if he or she does not receive medical treatment.

I submit to my colleagues in this House that if we are simply asking and conferring an authority on to physicians and those who have, by virtue of their authority, substitute decision-making responsibilities, the opportunity to prevent serious harm not only to the individual concerned but also to his or her loved ones, I believe we have a responsibility to ensure that the appropriate legislative framework is in place in this province for that to work.

I agree with my colleague the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health that this is not a stand-alone solution to the issue, that there must be other community supports, there must be an integrated and coordinated mental health system in this province — we're working towards that — but I also believe that this can form part and parcel of that integrated system within this province.

There are those who have labelled this philosophically to meet their political or personal ends, that this is a leash type of legislation. I don't believe that does credit to the intent of the member in bringing this forward. I don't believe it honours those for whom this piece of legislation is written. I believe that as a House we have a responsibility not to dismiss this legislation but to work with the member in committee to refine it, to improve it, and to ensure that the needs of those in our society who suffer mental health disorders are adequately met, that they're met in a timely order to their benefit and to the benefit of their loved ones.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I am pleased to join the debate and congratulate my colleague from Ottawa Centre for bringing forward this resolution today. I know he has put a great deal of effort and work into this. There already has been extensive consultation. I appreciate the tone that all members of the House are taking because this is a very difficult issue. It is not an easy issue.

I think the whole area of mental illness is one of the most complex, least understood things that we deal with today. It's not as easy as trying to deal with a physical ailment in the sense that someone needs surgery for some illness and it's done. People tend to understand what that's all about. But when it comes to mental illness, it's a much more difficult issue. It's one that is complex and one that most of us have experiences with in family members, relatives or friends who have gone through this very difficult situation.

You need to ensure that any legislation that deals with this is balanced and takes into consideration the rights of the individual and at the same time that fine line between forcing treatment, between forcing involuntary admission and stepping on civil liberties and the rights of individuals. It's a very difficult line to walk, and any legislation that

can help to improve that I think is welcome by the consumers, by the families and by Ontarians as a whole.

The area I want to focus on briefly, and I'll leave a couple of minutes for my colleague, is that most individuals who suffer from mental illness are not a threat to themselves or to others. It's a very difficult situation, it's difficult for the family, but in most cases it is not a case of a threat. But there are situations where individuals, as a result of the illness, can cause harm to themselves or to others. This is what I'm hoping that this bill, even if it's a few situations that are critical here, can help address. We've all heard the frustrations of family members who have a difficult time trying to get treatment or help for someone because a person refuses to take that treatment or that help, and know there is a potential for danger, know there is a potential for suicide, know there is a potential to harm other individuals.

What is glaring to me, coming from the community of Hamilton, is an incident that occurred in my own riding a couple of years ago. As a result of years and years of mental illness and difficulties that this woman was having, the family tried desperately to get this person into some type of treatment, tried desperately to get this person admitted to a facility because they knew she was in a difficult situation and could potentially harm herself or others. Unfortunately, this resulted in a tragedy where a two-year-old boy was stabbed with scissors and killed while playing in an alleyway beside the house.

When this tragedy occurred, it was not only a tragedy for the family, it tore out our hearts in our community to see this happen to that two-year-old boy. But what made it more difficult was later listening to the family of the woman who has been convicted of killing this two-year-old boy, the difficulties the family had in trying to get treatment and help for this woman. They believe today, as I do, that if there were more flexibility in legislation, in cases like this a family somehow could force admittance into a facility if there's a danger there. It is available in the act today but the rules and conditions are so rigid that it often makes it very difficult. I believe, had this type of legislation been in place today, the tragedy of this two-year-old boy — and the inquest is going to start in Hamilton — would have been avoided.

I hope members look at this legislation in that compassionate, caring sense. It may not be perfect, it may need to be fixed a little bit, but I certainly believe it's a step in the right direction.

Mr Patten: I'd like to take a little bit of time to respond to some of my colleagues. I appreciate the comments made.

The first thing I'd like to say, in response to my friend from Riverdale, is that we've studied the bill and the bill has barriers. I'm told by families that bills have barriers. The word "imminent" is a barrier to understanding when you can treat someone. I'm asked by families and members who have friends with schizophrenia, "When does a physician make a determination of when someone is severely ill and imminently ill?" Often that is interpreted to mean right now, and it isn't. Psychiatrists pre-empt the

board. They wait and they say, "The person isn't all that bad," and that encourages severe illness. The longer persons suffer from psychosis, the more difficult it is to treat them and bring them back to where they presumably were before they suffered from the event — extremely important. So the medical evidence flies in the face of what the bill provides.

The other thing is that it provides only for a physician — I've heard people say, "The police can start rounding up people off the street." No way. They cannot do this. This is the most restrictive criterion of any particular jurisdiction that I'm aware of in Canada or in the United States, to be very specific and to deal with those who are in a revolving-door syndrome. That means they continue to go to hospital and two weeks later they're out. They go back into the community, there's no supervision, no support for them, they deteriorate again, they end up back in the hospital and this goes on and on. That's what we're attempting to address. It moves from a model and a statute of this to a model of trying to provide care. All the safeguards that are in the bill now are still there, and in fact reinforced to protect the rights of people.

1100

The other is that Ontario at the moment does not have a community treatment program. Most jurisdictions in North America — all the states in the US, five provinces in Canada — have what's called community treatment programs. These aren't ways of maintaining shackles on people; these are ways to get people, as quickly as possible, out of institutions and into an environment in which they have contact with family, with friends, with other people, and can do some things in a less restrictive manner but continue a particular program in which they can begin to heal again.

This is the most restrictive, as I say, because we're talking about dealing with a very small population of people who have lost their capacity. When we talk about civil liberties, I believe we have the right to treatment; people have a right to access to treatment. But when you lose capacity to be able to judge the consequences of your own decisions, you need to be supported in order to get treatment.

That is there in the bill now. The problem is that you have to wait until the eleventh hour, just before someone is about to commit suicide, or they actually do commit suicide, or they actually do beat someone else up, or they actually do threaten someone else severely. There is no room for understanding the pattern. Medical practitioners know that there is a pattern leading up to a particular episode that happens again and again and again; it's almost like a fingerprint. Why can't we acknowledge and see, with the safeguards we have, that the very best care system is able to treat people when they need it? The present bill does not do that.

This is not an answer for everything. It's an interim step. I support the government in reviewing the whole bill. This is one step along the way, and hopefully we can support it.

SAVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NORFOLK AND HALDIMAND ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 VISANT À PRÉSERVER LE GOUVERNEMENT LOCAL À NORFOLK ET À HALDIMAND

Mr Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 80, An Act to eliminate the regional level of municipal government in Norfolk and Haldimand, to cut duplication and to save taxpayers' money / *Projet de loi 80, Loi visant à éliminer le niveau régional du gouvernement municipal à Norfolk et à Haldimand ainsi que le double emploi et à faire réaliser des économies aux contribuables.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): The member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): It is with great pleasure that I move second reading of this bill. Let me say at the outset that I firmly believe this bill has its roots in the finest tradition of our democratic parliamentary process. It is in keeping with the wishes of over 10,000 of my closest advisers. They have all made the choice to sign a petition calling for the dismantling of regional government in Haldimand-Norfolk.

Somebody said, "Those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it." I have been studying regional government in my area for 27 years now. Back when the region was just a gleam in some bureaucrat's eye, I helped conduct focus groups for the Earl Berger study. This study was commissioned by the government of the day to gauge people's reaction to the idea of regional government. The result: People didn't want regional government then and they don't want it now.

We can learn from the past. In 1971, during these focus groups, the fear most people mentioned at public meetings was that of higher taxes, and now in 1998, 27 years later, we have seen the highest property tax increase of any region in the province of Ontario. A 17.9% hike has been thrust on residents of Haldimand-Norfolk.

Now, 17.9% is a tax increase that residents cannot afford. A fellow from St Williams told regional council this fall of his difficulties: "I came down here hoping for some answers. I know you don't have any answers this morning, but my taxes have gone up to the point where I will have to go out of business and I will have to sell my property."

I want to read some other quotes, both from 1971 and 1998, then and now.

In 1971, a man from Caledonia, again at these focus groups: "I just think of more and more men up there doing less and less...and taxing the farmers higher and higher just to keep them there."

Also in 1971, a Caledonia farmer: "The most frightening thing about regional government, as a farmer, are the taxes."

Again in 1971, a Cayuga resident stated, "The bigger the organization, the more feather-bedding, the more people can be hired and no one knows what they're

doing." Today in our region, after Stelco, regional government has become the area's biggest employer.

This past fall, a fellow from Oneida speaking to council on the elimination of regional government stated: "Because you are in a crisis you have an opportunity to do something really big, really good — you have an opportunity to go down in history. Please don't miss it."

Back in 1971, an Oneida resident told the Earl Berger study, "When the government gets further away, administration gets hog-wild."

Attitudes have not changed over the years. Recently, a Caledonia citizen told council, "The biggest savings that I can suggest is to get rid of regional government."

A Woodhouse township woman agreed. She told council: "The problem here is that we are overgoverned. We have too much government — it was pointed out that we have a government for half a million people. We've got to do something about the size of our government."

I also want to tell you a bit about some of the findings of the Berger study of 27 years ago, and I quote some of their conclusions:

"There is strong opposition to regional government in all groups sampled both in Haldimand and Norfolk, and in the areas adjacent to the two counties, including Wainfleet township in the Niagara region. There is strong support for increasing the powers of local government."

Compare this to what we hear today. In a recent Angus Reid poll commissioned by our local Simcoe Reformer and Annex publishing, the number one concern for people in my area is property taxes; not health, not education, not jobs and the economy. Some 49% of the people in this poll named property taxes as their number one concern. With the highest property tax increase in the province, at 17.9%, this does not come as a surprise.

The Angus Reid survey, and this was just completed November 3, 4 and 5, as I recall, reported that 85% of Haldimand-Norfolk residents feel there are too many politicians; 71% feel regional government doesn't communicate; 64% don't believe that government is "fine and should be left alone," as was asked in the poll, and 60% support action now; 60% don't feel that regional government spends money wisely. According to Angus Reid, only 20% of people are attached to the region. Some 74% are attached to local government; 66% oppose losing their local level of government; 72% feel there are too many levels of government; and 39% of people favour one tier. Only 8% of residents want a mega-region. We can learn from the Simcoe Reformer survey. People in Haldimand-Norfolk have been polled, and they believe that change is needed.

Potential drawbacks to regional government mentioned in the Berger study of 1971 were higher taxes, rising costs, loss of community autonomy, a diminishing role for local government, remoteness from citizens, bureaucracy and red tape. From what I see, little has changed in the ensuing 27 years.

I feel that municipal restructuring is needed in Haldimand-Norfolk. Local people elected me to help fix government. As the former Ontario Department of

Municipal Affairs said back in 1971 when justifying change: "No system of government is a sacred cow. It is only a device for helping people to live and work together safely, effectively, and harmoniously."

The restructuring powers contained in Bill 26, as members know, do not give regional municipalities the power to restructure. This is why I have brought forward this bill: to give citizens of my constituency the ability to design and institute a form of local government that they both favour and can afford.

The bill does several things. First and foremost, it gives municipalities in Norfolk and Haldimand the ability to come up with a restructuring proposal that eliminates the regional level and restructures the lower tier. Any successful proposal must be fully costed out, it must be subject to public consultation, it must limit restructuring to the current boundaries of the region, and it must be approved by a majority of local councils and by regional councillors.

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I feel the strength of this bill is its public consultation process. Any municipality making a proposal must hold a public meeting in each of the other six current municipalities. All citizen input must be recorded. The meetings must be well advertised, and anyone wishing to speak will be allowed to do so.

If no proposal is forthcoming, the minister shall appoint a commission. A commission plan is bound by the same rules as any municipality submitting a proposal; public meetings must be held. A commission report will be implemented on or before January 1, 2001.

Previous governments have studied Haldimand-Norfolk. We certainly have enough studies and enough experience now with regional government to know that it is not working. Our large agricultural area cannot support the current system. It was built on the assumption that 320,000 people would live in Haldimand-Norfolk by the end of the century. The population is still under 100,000, and the end of the century is only 13 months away.

In 1989 and 1994 studies were done, the Pennell report and the Barnes report respectively. The Barnes report of 1994, under the NDP, concluded that a reduction in councillors at both levels of government was needed. It reported that the regional system was too large, that it was "impractical and unresponsive to residents' needs." Regional council rejected the report's recommendations. The 1989 Pennell report conducted by the Liberals also provides insight. This report told us the regional structure came, but not the envisioned development and population growth.

Regional chairs also published a report in 1995 to reduce the number of elected officials and to eliminate levels of government, and people seem to be agreeing with those recommendations as well.

What this bill does is give local people an opportunity to have their say with respect to local government. They also want to fix government. Both opposition parties have sponsored reviews, and I look forward to hearing their position on restructuring today.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Let me first of all say that I wonder where the member was when we talked about setting up the new city of Toronto. Some of the quotes that he used certainly could have been used on that occasion. When he says that the bigger the organization, the more the feather-bedding, and when you look at what's happened here in Toronto with the megacity, where was he? I didn't hear him saying those kinds of things at that time. He also said that when government gets further away, the system goes hog-wild. Those were exactly some of the comments people were making at the time, so where were you at that time?

I guess the biggest difficulty I have with this proposal is that it doesn't set out all the possible options. It doesn't set out, for example, a one-tier, one-municipality option for Haldimand-Norfolk. It totally eliminates the possibility of the status quo, that maybe regional government the way it is currently structured is in the long run the desirable way to go. It makes a number of assumptions that those two options shouldn't even be considered at all.

Now, let's take a look as to why the taxpayers of Haldimand-Norfolk are upset about their tax increases. I got some information that clearly indicates — and this is from their treasurer and commissioner of finance. Let me just read to you what he says in his letter. He says that provincial estimates show that the program was to be revenue-neutral, the downloading. "The calculation made by our staff for the budget shows a tax impact of \$5.8 million. This has occurred because the revenue-neutral guarantee did not include the cost of policing services and transferred roadways."

They've given me a summary page of their budget which clearly indicates that in police services alone there was an extra \$1.5-billion increase in services and another \$5.5 million — did I say "billion"? I meant "million" — for police services, and in the area of roadways and the transferred highways of \$330,000. When you add it all together, they have clearly indicated that the tax impact as a result of the downloading was \$5.8 million.

No wonder the people of Haldimand-Norfolk are extremely upset over what has happened there. They don't know who to blame. This has been the whole theory of this government, that we throw this all up in the air, we do a whole bunch of restructurings, we do some downloading, we bring in a system we call current value assessment and then we don't implement it because we make changes to it in seven successive bills, totally confusing the general taxpayers out there. They don't know who to blame, and the government is succeeding in some respect in shifting the blame to the municipalities, because people really don't know what to do any more.

I totally agree with them that there has always been a feeling in certain parts of regional municipalities, and I used to hear it when I was at municipal council, that regional municipalities aren't going to work and don't work. I heard it way back into the 1970s. But the one option that may be a very viable option in this case is rejected by them totally out of hand. That is just to have a one-tier municipality in exactly the same way that we've

got a one-tier municipality here in the megacity. I don't know why he excluded that. Why would he exclude that as a possible option that they should look at over the next year or so?

I'm not going to get personal with the member because I respect the member, but I've been reading some of the editorials in his area, and just about every newspaper there seems to come up with exactly the same scenario. They all seem to say something like, and I'm just quoting from one of them, "The proposed legislation is nothing less than an attempt to divert attention and shift the blame for provincial government policies which are crushing the very foundation of Ontario, its property taxpayers." That repeats itself over and over.

Another one, a more positive one in the Simcoe Reformer, states: "Mr Barrett may have started the ball rolling, but where he fails is in providing details. In essence, Mr Barrett may have put the cart before the horse by calling for the abolition of regional government before studying all the options to replace it."

That is the real issue here. Yes, the people are upset, and I don't doubt the sincerity of his petition at all and how frustrated the taxpayers feel out there, but I think it simply isn't appropriate for a government studying something to in effect already exclude one or two of the viable options that may be out there. It's for that reason that we will not be supporting this bill.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I am happy to have this opportunity to respond to Bill 80 and would begin by saying that in the Tillsonburg News on October 28, Mr Barrett was quoted as saying he would table legislation in the spring if local ratepayers desired change. Instead of waiting, he has pushed ahead without, in my view, adequate consultation. That's one serious problem.

The other problem is that there was a meeting on October 27 at the Simcoe Legion on the issue of restructuring, and at the meeting my good friend from Scarborough East, Mr Gilchrist, assured local ratepayers that the ministry is looking for a local solution, not one designed by Queen's Park. It is somewhat inconsistent with what the member is introducing today. It is also inconsistent with what he said on October 28 with respect to introducing something in the spring should people desire something.

There's something afoot. I dare say it's political, obviously. We know from what the member said that people have been against regional government for a long time. Ever since they created a regional government in 1974, the good folks from that area were not happy. We understand that. They still seem to be unhappy, and he makes that point. But how do we deal with this unhappiness?

Well, he says, there have been tremendous tax increases over the last little while, leading me to believe, and the audience that's watching today, that these tax increases — they've gone up 17% — are due to the regional government, and for that we must teach them a lesson and presumably abolish the regional government.

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What he fails to mention is that these tax increases have nothing to do with the regional government as much

as they have to do with the downloading of a whole lot of other responsibilities to the municipal government. But he conveniently blames the regional government for these tax increases and capitalizes on people's anger over these tax increases by making that leap and having people understand or make the assumption that the tax increases are due to the regional government. It's due to these guys here downloading everything to the municipalities.

It isn't just me saying it. It makes it appear that if a New Democrat says this, then it must be wrong because they're in opposition and they're against it. It's your own editorial in that community speaking about this and they say:

"The region has been bombed with new expenses for highways" — the writer uses the word "bombed"; I would use the word "whacked," but "bombed" is worse — "welfare, police, ambulance service, nursing homes and public housing. At the same time, farmers lost rebates for taxes on agricultural land.

"Barrett steadfastly has refused to recognize this. Instead, he has blamed regional government for adding these costs to property bills."

That's what we're dealing with. So we need to tell the general public who has caused these property tax increases. It is M. Barrett, the member for Norfolk, and his good buddies through the Premier, M. Harris, who have caused this problem, foisted this particular problem on to those communities. That's the first thing.

Second, what the member for Norfolk is proposing here is something that decentralizes, as opposed to centralizes, communities. It's not something I want but it's something the good Tories on the other side want.

You will recall M. Harris and so many others in Metropolitan Toronto arguing that we needed to get rid of all the cities in the Metro area, get rid of the waste, as is indicated by this bill. So the member for Norfolk argues that we need to decentralize to save money. It's ambivalent. To me it's paradoxical, contradictory. It's quite possible that the Tories can live with both, it's quite possible, but I certainly can't.

I know that the good people in Norfolk are dumbfounded and confused about these contradictions. What I'm assuming the member for Norfolk is saying is that he would want to have Haldimand-Norfolk end up with six welfare offices, six planning departments, six water and sewer crews and so on. So much for duplication, to follow the argument of Tories, not necessarily my own.

How do you deal with these inconsistencies and how do you deal with the fact that there are a whole lot of people in that community angered by the bill that the member for Norfolk has presented today? It isn't necessarily me being angry so much as pointing out the contradictions and problems connected with this bill. It is people in those communities who are angry, particularly councillors.

This particular article was written by Mr Reid. He quotes a Simcoe councillor, Mr Kent, who says the following:

"The title annoys me. Just the first word makes me furious. I have four questions. Saving from what? Saving for whom? Saving for what? Saving from whom?"

He continues by saying: "How can we consider restructuring our corporation when we have all this downloading? It's bunk. All I can see in this is personal vendettas. All the malcontents in this region looking for an opportunity embrace this legislation. I'm furious with the paper I hold in my hand at this time."

"Delhi Mayor Rover Vermeulen said the bill was just a 're-election' ploy."

Even others who supported this bill have concerns with it.

I read another poll done by Angus Reid which says:

"Respondents have indicated a number of options with near-equal support. A one-tier government garnered the most support with 39%, but 27% prefer a two-county system and 22% are in favour of the status quo."

What that clearly indicates is that there are a lot of different positions. But some of these alternatives that are supported by a high number of respondents are rejected by the bill, as indicated by Mr Robert Johnston. He wrote this letter on his own merits as an individual. He happens to be the treasurer, no doubt, I agree, but he says:

"The bill would limit options available for reorganization, including both the status quo and the one-tier municipalities, covering the entire geographic area of Haldimand-Norfolk."

That's a problem. I'm convinced that some of you good people from those areas would agree that this is a problem. How could you introduce a bill that prescribes certain options and eliminates — discards, literally — other options that are strongly supported by the people of those communities? I'm convinced that if Tories are reasonable, if that can be possible — I'm sure there are some — they would agree that this is a no-go, that this is a no-brainer, as the Speaker of the House used to say from time to time when he was in opposition. I agree with that. I don't mean to cast aspersions on the member at all. All I'm saying is that he introduces a bill that is resisted logically, reasonably by good-minded people of that community.

What you need to do is permit those communities to come up with their local solutions. That would be the most fair-minded thing to do. You've got to allow a certain level of democracy to exist. If you reject that model, meaning that local communities should come together to come up with their own alternatives of what they can support, you are rejecting a democratic process, which in all reasonable-minded countries is something that would be a problem.

I'm looking forward to hearing some other speakers who are obviously edgy and want to speak to the bill. I'm not sure if M. Klees wants to, I'm looking forward to that, but I've got a few more minutes. I want to hear your response. I want to see how you defend this particular bill. I'm interested. You might want to support a bill that nobody supports, but I'll tell you it's a problem. It is a problem in many different ways.

The provisions proposed in this bill are actually less democratic than Bill 26. Under Bill 26, a commission can only be appointed if 75 residents of a municipality request it. Under M. Barrett's bill, the province must appoint a commission if there is no local solution. No one, including the province, has any choice when you look at section 19. All proposals, whether municipally generated or imposed by a commissioner, must dissolve the regional council. Here again M. Barrett is prejudging this situation before it unfolds. All proposals must also leave at least two municipalities still standing — again, prescribing what should exist, as opposed to what people think should exist, as opposed to what they believe the appropriate alternatives should be for their communities.

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I am worried, first of all, about the inherent contradictions of the position that the member for Norfolk takes, and if his colleagues support this, they too will contradict themselves vis-à-vis their overall agenda to centralize everything as they did here in the city of Toronto, as they did with Bill 160 to centralize education finances in the hands of M. Harris; particularly the Minister of Education but really the Premier. That is the trend of these Tories, contrary to their old Tory position that big was bad.

They still say big is bad and yet the direction has been to make things bigger and bigger, and in my view they contradict themselves. I want to hear their position in this regard because I believe they're making a serious political mistake. I believe the member for Norfolk is making a serious political mistake, while he thinks he is doing good for himself by supporting a whole lot of people disenchanted with the regional government by pretending that he supports their concerns about high property taxes.

Everyone in the community will understand, as they read the newspapers, as I'm sure they do in those local communities, that property tax increases have a lot to do with your download and not with the regional government. So fix that problem, fix the downloading problem before you try to fix anything else, but I urge this member and urge the others present today to consider seriously the wrong direction this is heading in in terms of not permitting local municipalities to come up with their own local solutions for those local problems.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I'm pleased to rise, and let me first of all correct the record. The member for Fort York referred to "Deli." "Deli" is in northern India. The "Del-hi" that is referred to in the references is actually the home, I believe, of the regional chair, Mr John Harrison, who is with us here today, and we welcome him.

I'm pleased to speak on this bill. I would very much have liked this bill to read in its title "An Act to eliminate the regional level of municipal government in York Region, to cut duplication and to save taxpayers' money." The objective of this legislation is set out very clearly in its title, and that is to cut duplication and save taxpayers' money. It's not at all surprising that our colleagues in the Liberal Party as well as the NDP would want to put the brakes on something that would reduce the size of government, that they would oppose an initiative on the part

of a member of this House to bring some form of rationalization to government.

I'd like to address the issue from perhaps a rather practical purpose. For many years and in my other life I was involved to some degree in the development industry and I can't tell you how many times we questioned those in our industry at the time. Often in discussions with local councillors, when we brought forward proposals of development the frustration that was expressed was that we had to address, first of all, a planning department at the municipal level, and then we had to address a planning department at the regional level. We had to address an engineering department at the local municipality, and then we had to address issues at the engineering department at the regional level. And it goes on.

The question that was constantly asked, and a very proper one, and I believe this is the question the honourable member is asking through this piece of legislation, is, why is it that we need those additional levels of government and all of the bureaucracy that goes with it? Can we not, together, come up with a system of government that is not duplicating efforts, that strips away that red tape, that makes it much more efficient to make these decisions?

The original objective of regions was in fact not to be a level of government. It was intended to be a coordinating body and, as time would have it, it evolved into this great, lumbering creature that we have now throughout the province, which is doing the exact opposite of what it was intended to do, and that was to bring efficiency to a growing province and to growing populations.

I submit that the objective the member has is that the local municipalities have a say in what the new face of the government for the area would look like. He has made it very clear that the initiative should come from local municipalities, that there is an opportunity for consultation and, based on that process, at the end of the day a much more efficient system of government. What I commend the member for is that he's bringing leadership to this. I believe he's breaking a log-jam that has existed in this discussion, not only in this area but throughout the province.

I'd like to quote from the Delhi paper. It refers to Councillor Mike Columbus, who expressed his sentiments, adding that he'd be surprised if anything ever comes of Barrett's bill: "'We've had four different reports on restructuring that I know of,' Columbus said, 'but when it comes to change, nothing has happened.'"

I believe that's the very reason the member is bringing this legislation forward, because on the one hand he recognizes that something needs to be done to change this constant duplication, this inefficient way of doing business at this level of government. What he is saying is that through this piece of legislation he's prepared to break that log-jam, he's prepared to break that inertia, and give leadership to the people in this area, give them an opportunity to have their say and bring responsible government, a government that reduces duplication and that will at the end of the day save taxpayers' money. I commend him for

his initiative and I believe this will be a model for other areas in the province.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to join the debate today on the resolution of my colleague from Norfolk. As other members, my colleagues on this side of the House, have expressed clearly, I think this bill is much more of an attempt to duck responsibility for a government-imposed, government-hammered government-driven solution of downloading and passing responsibilities to local taxpayers.

What I would have liked to have seen and I think what would have been a much more appropriate resolution today that would have fit the needs in that community and right across Ontario is a resolution that would have asked the government to pay back to the municipalities and to the region of Haldimand-Norfolk the money that they owe in downloading. That would have been a step in the right direction. They were short-changed by close to \$6 million. That, in my view, would have solved part of the problem.

But I recall when my colleague from Hamilton Centre brought forward a resolution asking the government to basically pay up the \$37 million that they owe the people of Hamilton-Wentworth, that they screwed us out of in downloading. Every single member on the government side of the House voted against that resolution. In my view, that would have been the approach.

I find it absolutely bizarre when I look at this and at your past actions, I look at what you've done in Hamilton-Wentworth, I look at what you've done in Toronto — or what you haven't done in Hamilton-Wentworth — and I look at this resolution. These things just seem to be all over the map.

I don't understand how you think you can cut duplication by moving backwards rather than forwards. Every single study across North America has shown, and I challenge you to prove that wrong, that municipalities or regions up to about 500,000 people work much better with a one-tier structure, work much better with a coordinated planning of services, things such as police, health, welfare, planning, tax base. Every single study ever done across North America of every structure of government has shown that.

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This smacks of totally the opposite to that. We're going back now to saying each town will have its own planning department, so planning bylaws and zoning bylaws will change every mile. Each town now will have its own engineering department. Each town will now have its own clerks and treasurers. How does that cut duplication? The Tories were the government of less government. You were going to get rid of red tape; you were going to get rid of duplication. Now you have a resolution that says, "Let's go back to the old way, ensuring that we have 200 departments in every town and municipality across this province."

It makes absolutely no sense at all. It will only add cost. It doesn't ease the problem of downloading that you've forced municipalities across this province to deal with. That is a real problem, that you have decided you are

going to shift cost to the municipal level to make your books look better. It's that simple.

Look what you did in Metropolitan Toronto. You took a municipality of 2.4 million and you forced amalgamation on that area. There was no consultation, there were no studies — a tremendous public backlash and outcry, and you imposed it. Then I challenge you to look at what you did in my own municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, or what you haven't done. We've had 20 years of studies, reports, consultation, referendums, plebiscites and resolutions. We're not talking about a megacity there.

Think of this: You imposed one tier on this megacity of over two million people, when every study ever done says that doesn't work. Then you had an opportunity to act in a municipality like Hamilton-Wentworth, where there was a deal that had four out of six municipalities on board, where 85% of the public represented by those municipalities was on board, where you had piles of reports and consultant studies saying: "Yes, it's more effective. Yes, you'll save money if you move to a one-tier structure of regional government." Again, we're talking about less than 500,000 people here; we're not talking about 2.4 million or 2.5 million or 2.2 million.

You had those opportunities, and what did your Minister of Municipal Affairs and the cabinet do? They ducked every single time. It caused chaos. It caused a crisis in my region, because they failed to act. They were absolutely gutless in doing the right thing, where you had a consensus, where you had evidence beyond a doubt that showed it would save money and was the right thing to do.

So you ram it down the throats of Metro Toronto, which doesn't want it and you put in a system here that doesn't work. On the other hand, with a municipality that had consensus in four out of six, 85% of the population, you failed to act.

Now we have a resolution that strikes out totally in a third direction. I just don't understand, frankly, where this is coming from. I've had a chance to look at the editorials and I'll be honest with you: I'm not familiar with the ins and outs of that region. I don't live in that region. I don't represent that region. But I've had a chance to look at the editorials and read the letters that have come in. I'm trying to understand where the support or the rationale for this is coming from.

I like to see studies, I like to see evidence that the member can show us where going back to the old system, going back to every little town and empire running their own thing totally, with duplication, is going to save money. I would like to see some evidence of that, because all the information I have in front of me here, all the newspaper articles, letters and editorials that are here clearly do not in any way, shape or form address that or show us. It just shows the opposite.

I would like the member to respond, to tell me how going back to the system of continuing to ensure that we have possibly six police services, six social service departments, six health departments, six planning departments, six treasurers, six clerks, six licence departments, is going to save us money. Because you know what? Each

one of those departments has a department head. Each one of those departments needs support staff.

Frankly, when you're dealing with a small area, a small community population-wise — it is not a megacity; it is not representing two million people. It's much smaller and you can do it much more efficiently. If you're going to move in any direction, I would suggest it's the opposite direction, rather than the direction this resolution suggests.

I go back to where we started on this: What is driving this? I can tell you what is driving this. The member, I'm sure, through his office, is getting the same abuse, the same phone calls that most government members are getting in regard to property tax increases. You can hide or you can try, but you have failed. As you failed to pin school closures on school boards, you are failing miserably to pin municipal tax increases on municipal governments. You're getting the heat, and rightly so, because most municipal governments across this province have done a tremendous job of eliminating duplication, of cutting where necessary, of trying to bring in budgets and taxes that do not negatively impact their taxpayers.

If they were left to their own devices in doing that, most municipalities would have come in at zero, below zero or with a tax decrease. But they couldn't cope with what you dropped on them. They could not cope with the millions of dollars you have shoved down the throats of municipal governments. That is what the problem is, and that is what the solution is trying to address.

I wish the member had taken the other approach. I would have been happy to support a resolution that said, "Let us give the good people you represent the money we owe them, because we shafted them in downloading." I would have been happy, and I would have stood and supported your resolution. But that wasn't the case. That is not what the Premier's office would have wanted you to do, because they're embarrassed, because that would have been an acknowledgement that your downloading exercise was not revenue-neutral. Nobody believes that it is revenue-neutral any more. You've lost that fight; you've lost that argument.

If you're going to help people you represent, I would suggest that you go back to your Minister of Finance, that you go back to the Premier, and say: "We've got a problem. We're facing tax increases of up to 17% because we have downloaded services to the municipal level. Give us the money you owe us." That would be the right thing to do. That would be the just thing to do.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I appreciate the opportunity to participate this morning. I'd like to steal a page from Charles Dickens's book *A Tale of Two Cities*, and talk about two parts of our province that aren't exactly cities, but for the purposes of this analogy we will refer to them as such. One of those is the area of Haldimand-Norfolk; the other one is my part of the province, which is called Chatham-Kent.

Now, these two parts of our province have some similarities. They both have a population around the 100,000 mark, a little less in Haldimand-Norfolk, a little more in Chatham-Kent, but certainly in that same ballpark. You'd

be interested to know that at this current point in time those roughly 100,000 people in Haldimand-Norfolk have something in excess of 60 local politicians. Just by way of comparison, that's more local politicians than the 2.5 million people in the city of Toronto have. But anyway, the people of Haldimand-Norfolk have 60 politicians, somewhere in excess of that. The people of Chatham-Kent, the same number of people roughly, have 18 local politicians. The people in Haldimand-Norfolk have two tiers of government, a regional chair of government plus some local government. The people in Chatham-Kent made some difficult decisions and ended up with one chair of government. So we have two comparable volumes of people, but in one case almost four times as many local politicians, the area that has two layers of government.

Both of those parts of the province, along with all other parts of our province, were asked to go through a process called the realignment of services, where the province took back control of educational funding, which you and I both know has spiralled totally out of control in our province. The province has taken that back, and in exchange for taking back that responsibility we've asked municipalities to take on some other responsibilities.

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We asked Haldimand-Norfolk, with its two levels of government and its 60-plus politicians, to go through the realignment of services; and we asked Chatham-Kent, with its single level of government and its 18 politicians, to also go through the realignment of services. Now we have a situation where it comes to levying taxes for the 1998-99 year and, lo and behold, at this particular point in time the tale of two cities gets very different. Now we have the region of Haldimand-Norfolk imposing an unbelievable 17.9% tax increase on its citizens, and the people of Chatham-Kent enjoying, due to the hard work of our local politicians — only 18 of them, by the way — no tax increase. As Charles Dickens says in his book, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." It's not that difficult to apply which one of those particular phrases suits the area of Haldimand-Norfolk.

I'm not sure what is the right answer for Haldimand-Norfolk, because I don't live in the area, I'm not part of the area, but I know that in every area of this province, and the absolute proof of the fact of it is Chatham-Kent, we have substantially too much local government. The taxpayers of Ontario can no longer afford and no longer need all that local government.

The member has brought forward a bill that says, "We will eliminate one level of government in Haldimand-Norfolk." He hasn't gone much beyond that. He's allowed much latitude, much opportunity for input from the citizens of his area, but he has said that we have too much government. You don't have to look any further than Chatham-Kent to know the advantages of eliminating a layer of government.

I find it unconscionable that members of this House would continue to support, just because it happens to be the way we've always done it, an incredibly inefficient system of government in Haldimand-Norfolk that this year

has resulted in an almost 18% tax increase, when on the other hand we know that a simple single-tier level of government in a likewise community just down the road has benefited from no tax increase.

I'm totally supportive of the initiative put forward by the member for Norfolk. I believe it is the right way to go to eliminate that excess local government in all the areas of our province.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to join the debate and support Mr Barrett's bill today. I also support his bill because it puts forward a restructuring proposal and it gets on with the job of restructuring local government. As the member for Chatham-Kent has just said, we have dramatically too much government at the municipal levels throughout Ontario.

The members opposite have used the term "downloading" several times today and they actually used it incorrectly. Downloading is when one level of government transfers services to another level of government without any revenues attached. In the exercise we've gone through over the past two years, we've transferred services to the municipal level of government with revenue attached, and that revenue has been, as the member for Chatham-Kent just explained, those educational property tax revenues that had been going to education for so many years that now the province is picking up. That's something that needs to be clear.

I always enjoy the speeches of the member for Fort York, but I remember that if he wants an example of directly passing on a cost to taxpayers, he has to look no further than when he was a school board trustee several years ago and he passed on, I believe, an 80% salary increase directly to local taxpayers. That is a prime example of directly passing something on, and that's not the case here.

We must try to explain quite a bit of the very large — the largest, I think, in the province — tax increase passed on by the regional municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk. One of the main reasons for that was something that's well known across the province now: a budgeted 237% increase in transfers to regional reserves. That's the biggest chunk. There's also a 15.5% increase in operational expenses. The office of the regional chair allocated itself a 12.5% increase in operational expenses. But that shift to regional reserves was a big reason for property tax increases. That happened all over the province in the past fiscal year. My own region, Niagara, for instance — right from the regional budget; anyone can look this figure up — received \$3 million from the province's special circumstances fund and chose to use only about \$850,000 towards lowering a deficit that they might have at the end of the year and put the rest in reserves.

They had social housing costs in their budget estimated at \$24.6 million when actual costs, they were told, were probably closer to \$22.6 million. But without making that change, they'll have extra money left for reserves.

You can go through and look at some OMERS savings that weren't budgeted. You can look at all the regions around the province that have a declining number of peo-

ple on social assistance partly paid for by the region. Most of those reductions in costs are not included in budgets.

I wasn't the only one back in my region when we talked about the budget debate about padding reserves. Thorold Mayor Tim Kenny tried unsuccessfully during their budget debate to move money proposed for reserves towards the tax levy. Kenny just couldn't buy setting aside money in reserves when taxes are going up 13%. "I call that padding the budget," said Kenny.

Subsequent to that, we learned a little bit more from regional councillors. The Welland mayor and a regional councillor in my area in October this year talked about the region's so-called pay-as-you-go policy for sewer and water treatment. He blasted it as being misleading and bordering on being fraudulent. He pointed out that, while the region tells everyone in our region that water and sewers are pay-as-you-go, last year they collected \$37 million in water revenues, yet the cost to the region of treating the water and sewer was only \$15 million, another area where they're padding reserves and at the same time increasing taxes. This happens everywhere.

Recently, my mayor in Niagara Falls has become fed up and has said in our paper, "Let's go it alone." He wants some restructuring down in my area, where we have 400,000 people and 13 levels of government. We need some change. Mr Barrett's bill proposes change. Ten thousand people in his constituency have asked for change, so I'm going to support their desire and Mr Barrett's desire for change in his municipality.

Mr Barrett: I would like to thank the members for participating in the debate on my bill. I appreciate the support and I wish to ask that this legislation move to the committee stage. After a vote at 12 I'll be asking for referral to the general government committee in order to deal with some of these concerns and to allow members of the opposition to have some further input.

I would like to wrap up the debate by restating some facts for the record. In contrast to what the member for Kingston and The Islands and the member for Fort York say, this legislation is unique in that it guarantees citizen participation. To the member for Fort York: You propose a Toronto solution, and I reject that.

With respect to citizen involvement, the ability of interested citizens to reorganize municipal government is a strong reason for them to make their views known and not to rely on just my option or my solution as an MPP.

Citizens of Norfolk and Haldimand will have the opportunity to take part in shaping their future environment. Local people wish to seize that opportunity and, as my colleague from York-Mackenzie confirmed, this bill guarantees citizen involvement.

No decisions on restructuring will be made without opportunities for every citizen to make his or her views known at public meetings and in writing. Not only individuals but municipalities, other public agencies and private groups and businesses will be invited to take advantage of these opportunities.

With respect to taxes, as the MPP for the area I don't like to see my constituents suffer under the unfair tax hike

that has been imposed on them this year, a tax hike of 17.9% which will kill jobs, kill growth and kill communities in my area. Help me change that situation.

MENTAL HEALTH
AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): We will now deal with ballot item number 33 standing in the name of Mr Patten.

Mr Patten has moved second reading of Bill 78.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour?

All those opposed?

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

SAVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IN NORFOLK AND HALDIMAND ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 VISANT À PRÉSERVER
LE GOUVERNEMENT LOCAL
À NORFOLK ET À HALDIMAND

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): Mr Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 80. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour?

All those opposed?

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

MENTAL HEALTH
AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until your name is called by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bradley, James J.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Jack
Chudleigh, Ted
Cunningham, Dianne
Duncan, Dwight
Gilchrist, Steve
Gravelle, Michael

Grimmett, Bill
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Maves, Bart
McLean, Allan K.
O'Toole, John
Parker, John L.
Patten, Richard
Pettit, Trevor

Ross, Lillian
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Shea, Derwyn
Spina, Joseph
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise and remain standing.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Churley, Marilyn

Elliott, Brenda
Hastings, John
Jordan, W. Leo
Marchese, Rosario

Marland, Margaret
Newman, Dan
Saunderson, William

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 29; the nays are 11.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The bill is ordered to the committee of the whole House.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I request that it be moved to the social development committee.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House? Carried.

SAVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IN NORFOLK AND HALDIMAND ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 VISANT À PRÉSERVER
LE GOUVERNEMENT LOCAL
À NORFOLK ET À HALDIMAND

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): All those in favour please rise and remain standing until your name is called by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Carroll, Jack
Chudleigh, Ted
Cunningham, Dianne
Elliott, Brenda
Gilchrist, Steve
Grimmett, Bill

Hastings, John
Jordan, W. Leo
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
McLean, Allan K.
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Parker, John L.
Pettit, Trevor

Ross, Lillian
Saunderson, William
Shea, Derwyn
Skarica, Toni
Spina, Joseph
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise and remain standing.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bradley, James J.
Caplan, David

Churley, Marilyn
Duncan, Dwight
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc

Marchese, Rosano
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 27; the nays are 11.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The bill is ordered to the committee of the whole House.

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I request that the bill be sent to the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' business having been completed, I do now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 pm.

The House recessed from 1211 to 1333.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TAXATION

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I'm addressing my comments today directly to the Premier, concerning the continuous lament with respect to business taxes. This time the complainant is a small business operator from the city of Stratford, Ontario. This is not a big business; this is one of those businesses that on a daily basis a husband and wife or mother and father or a single person conducts on behalf of the people in Ontario.

This is what they had to say. It is addressed directly to the Premier. "I wish to bring to your attention that our city of Stratford has raised our municipal taxes excessively and is blaming that increase on your government." This is a small operator, a bed-and-breakfast operator, and their business taxes went up by a stunning 340%. Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, a small business operator, 340%. On this particular business, the tax went up from \$9,000 to \$38,000.

They are not alone. There are small business operators in Ontario such as this one by the thousands. They are calling on the government; they are calling on the Premier; they are calling on the minister who is here in the House today to do something about it. On behalf of all the businesses in Ontario, I'm calling on the minister and on the Premier to do something about it.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): On November 24, the Harris government finally released the details of how funds targeted for nurse practitioners would be spent. The ministry press release specifically states, "This funding support enables a number of agencies to hire over 120 nurse practitioners." This statement is completely incorrect. In actual fact, only 22.5 new positions for NPs will be added to our system of community health centres; only three new NPs will be hired at nursing stations in northern Ontario.

The bulk of the remaining money will be used to increase the salaries of nurse practitioners already working in agencies to recognize their skills. Take the Centre de santé communautaire in Sudbury as an example. It will receive money to upgrade the salaries of the two nurse practitioners already employed. It will not receive money it asked for to hire two new NPs to provide more health care to residents in Sudbury, Rayside-Balfour and Valley East.

Across northern Ontario, a maximum of six new NPs may be hired: three in northern nursing stations and one in each of the community health centres in New Liskeard, Ignace and Longlac. New Democrats have urged the ministry to establish a special fund to allow nurse practitioners to work with family doctors in underserved areas. The ministry did not listen. As a result, some 26 northern communities, five in the Sudbury region alone, which are all declared underserved for health care, will

not benefit by having a nurse practitioner come to provide health care.

We need to get more nurse practitioners working in Ontario. It's a shame the government rhetoric on jobs falls so short of the reality.

HURRICANE RELIEF

Mr Bill Grimmert (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): Across my riding communities are coming together to provide relief to the victims of Hurricane Mitch which devastated parts of Central America about one month ago.

One effort based out of Lake of Bays township in Muskoka will see eight local individuals, seven of whom are members of the township's volunteer fire department, leave for Honduras to personally contribute to the relief effort. The eight individuals who will leave next Thursday are Lake of Bays fire chief Kelly Serson, Frank Van Gelder, Jason Provencher, Steve Wolman, Peter Wrattan, Charlie Cunningham, Heinz Hubbert and Tom Brown.

In a week's time, these men will pack all the supplies that weight restrictions will permit and get on a plane destined for the Honduran capital. Many of the supplies, which include blankets and medicine, have been donated by the community. From the capital, they will travel for four hours to the community of Choletca.

The area around Choletca was hard hit by Hurricane Mitch with 7,000 confirmed deaths and 11,000 people still reported missing. In Choletca itself, the main medical centre for the area was completely destroyed by the hurricane. With medical teams from around the world working to help the victims of this tragedy, rebuilding the local medical centre is a priority.

These eight volunteers from Muskoka will be providing low-key medical support and delivering supplies. Perhaps most importantly, their main effort will be to reconstruct this medical facility as quickly as possible. The volunteers are planning to be in Honduras for 11 days.

On behalf of my constituents and the Legislature, I want to wish these local citizens good luck and recognize them for their selfless efforts.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): Over the last few weeks I've visited many people in my riding and held many community meetings. The topic of discussion is always the same: Why is Mike Harris destroying public education in Ontario? Why are the cuts in education continuing? Why does the government keep picking fights with teachers? These are the same questions in every community.

I visited countless numbers of schools: Keelesdale, Weston Memorial, C.R. Marchant, George Harvey Collegiate, George Anderson, Dennis Avenue, Lambton Park. These schools are all threatened with closure.

I've also met with representatives of Pelmo Park, Flemington Public School, Frank Oke, Nelson A. Boylen, Gracefield, Brookhaven, Maple Leaf, Cordella Junior. On

behalf of these parents, these students and these communities, I want to deliver a message to the government.

Premier, the people of this province want the cuts in education to stop. They want you to stand up and take responsibility and recognize that your funding formula just doesn't work. These parents are not deceived by the fact that you've rescinded and gone halfway. They know this is just a stay of execution.

Again, it's not about which schools will stay open and which schools will close. Your cuts in education have hurt just about everyone in Toronto. That goes for all the kids and all the communities. They want you to stop with these cuts.

1340

AUGUSTO PINOCHET

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I, along with 200 Chileans, was very happy to celebrate yesterday's decision by the Law Lords which ruled that former dictator Pinochet cannot claim immunity for crimes that he committed.

His son, Augusto Pinochet Jr, said of this decision that it was "a political and Fascistic judgment." How sheltered this Augusto Pinochet Jr must have been all these years not to have noticed that this so-called frail old man led one of the most Fascistic regimes that tortured and killed thousands of innocent Chileans.

This ruling which was given yesterday by the Law Lords is a very important victory in the fight for accountability of perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

I hope the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, will do the right thing and decide to permit the extradition proceedings to go forward so that justice can finally come about and the final stages of healing will happen for the many Chileans who have been tortured over these years and the crimes this man has committed against them.

FRED WEST

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to honour a very special constituent. Mr Fred West, a veteran of the First World War, recently received the government of France's highest award for his military service and dedication. The Legion of Honour was presented to Mr West by France's Consul General at a special ceremony in Bowmanville on Remembrance Day.

This 99-year-old veteran is truly a remarkable person who at the age of 16 was helping to defend the Western Front as a machine gunner. Mr West has received many honours but the greatest was the recognition of the Legion of Honour from the government of France. The Legion of Honour is equivalent to the Order of Canada.

It has been 80 years since the end of the First World War, and I believe it is important now more than ever before that all veterans be thanked for their dedication to our province and indeed our country.

It is my privilege to congratulate Mr West for receiving the Legion of Honour from France. It's an honour to recognize him and all veterans for their service to country. The freedom we all enjoy is thanks to the many veterans, including Mr Fred West.

On a more personal note, it was a wonderful celebration. The community joined in: the mayor; John Greenfield, past president of the Bowmanville Legion; Lyne Pudister, who is now the legion's president; Doreen Park, who saw service in the First World War; Jim Connell, who is the new zone commander for area 10; and Neale and Shirley McLean, who bring respite service and quality of life to Mr West.

I'd like all members to thank Mr West for his service.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): As I picked up my National Post this morning and read the article "Master of US Attack Ads Works on Tory Campaign," I couldn't help but think of that old adage about my enemies' friend, in this case my enemies' friend Mike Murphy. According to Paul Rhodes, one of the whiz kids, he says, "He knows all kinds of advertising — negative, positive, what works and what doesn't." I bet he does, because you know what campaigns he has worked on? Senator Jesse Helms. Remember Senator Jesse Helms? And that great American patriot, Oliver North.

We've seen already for the last two weeks what this government is all about. It's about attack ads. Let me tell you, my enemies' friends are Oliver North and Jesse Helms. That's what this government's about. That's what they're going to do.

We're looking forward. We hope you will keep up the advertisements you've been running.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Brampton North.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Brampton North, come to order, please. I called your name three times.

Mr Duncan: I would say to the people of Ontario, in my defence, that the same guy who did all of Oliver North's and Jesse Helms's promotions has been spending 48 million taxpayer dollars for your phony right-wing propaganda.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): We are facing a challenge of mammoth and potentially devastating proportions in our country right now. It is the very destructive and unprecedented dumping of steel by offshore companies. This activity affects Ontario in a major way, particularly the communities of Hamilton and Sault Ste Marie.

I'm calling today on the federal government, specifically the Department of National Revenue, to move quickly on the anti-dumping trade action brought forward

by the steel industry. The ministry has now deemed that the case is fully documented. They now have to decide to accept the action and bring it forward to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal.

All of us here and anybody out there concerned about the future of the steel industry in Ontario, Hamilton, Sault Ste Marie, need to be writing or calling the federal Department of National Revenue and Minister Dhaliwal to move quickly. I am calling on the Ontario government, on behalf of the steel industry and the communities they support, primarily Sault Ste Marie and Hamilton, and the jobs these industries represent, to intercede with the federal government to act now before any more damage is done.

The US government, as we speak, is moving to protect their interests. This could put us in double jeopardy if we are not acting together. If the US deems itself to be injured by this dumping, steel heading for the US will now be coming to Canada, and that will hit us —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements.

HAMILTON SEEKERS VOLLEYBALL CLUB

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): Last night the Wall of Fame at Copps Coliseum saw the addition of some new inductees to its already distinguished list of sports celebrities.

I'm speaking today of the 12 girls, coach and coaching staff of the Hamilton Seekers Volleyball Club. This group of hard-working, dedicated girls has been described by their coach as terrific, happy kids who like to work hard, and indeed they have worked exceptionally hard.

Since 1978 this team has represented consistently and proudly the city of Hamilton at city, provincial, national and international levels. The Seekers Volleyball Club and their coach, Frank Lilliman, have brought home to Hamilton a great distinction in Canadian champions.

The Hamilton Seekers attended the Canadian Open Midget Championships in Calgary earlier this year and went undefeated in 11 games in a tournament that saw 115 teams compete. Their final game saw them come from behind to defeat the US champions, eventually winning the game 2 to 1 and giving them the title as Canadian Open Midget Champions.

I congratulate all the girls, their coach and their coaching staff for a job well done and a distinction well deserved.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I beg leave to present a report on Bill 55 from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act / *Projet de loi 55, Loi révisant la Loi sur la qualification professionnelle et l'apprentissage des gens de métier*, the title of which is amended to read "An Act respecting apprenticeship and certification / *Loi concernant l'apprentissage et la reconnaissance professionnelle*."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

The Speaker: All those in favour of adopting the report from the standing committee on general government on Bill 55, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Johnson, David	Saunderson, William
Carroll, Jack	Leach, Al	Shea, Derwyn
Chudleigh, Ted	Marland, Margaret	Skarica, Toni
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	McLean, Allan K.	Snobelen, John
Ecker, Janet	Munro, Julia	Spina, Joseph
Elliott, Brenda	Newman, Dan	Sterling, Norman W.
Flaherty, Jim	O'Toole, John	Stewart, R. Gary
Ford, Douglas B.	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Tascona, Joseph N.
Froese, Tom	Parker, John L.	Tilson, David
Grimmett, Bill	Pettit, Trevor	Tsubouchi, David H.
Harnick, Charles	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Villeneuve, Noble
Harris, Michael D.	Ross, Lillian	Witmer, Elizabeth

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	Morin, Blain K.
Bartolucci, Rick	Kormos, Peter	North, Peter
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pouliot, Gilles
Christopherson, David	Lankin, Frances	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Lessard, Wayne	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	Silipo, Tony
Cordiano, Joseph	Martel, Shelley	Wildman, Bud
Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 26.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 14, 1998, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 69, An Act to amend the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and to enact the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998 /
Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur l'intégrité des députés et édictant la Loi de 1998 sur l'enregistrement des lobbyistes.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

VINTNERS QUALITY ALLIANCE ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ APPELÉE VINTNERS QUALITY ALLIANCE

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to provide for the designation of a wine authority to establish an appellation of origin for Vintners Quality Alliance wine and to administer that system /
Projet de loi 85, Loi prévoyant la désignation d'un office des vins afin d'établir et d'administrer un système d'appellations d'origine pour les vins de la société appelée Vintners Quality Alliance.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I just want to say that this was the result of a co-operative effort. From the VQA I'd like to thank Len Penechetti, who is the current chairman, and Don Ziraldo, who is the originating chairman of VQA; the Wine Council of Ontario under the chairmanship of Bruce Walker; and the grape growers, under John Neufeld. As well, I'd like to thank the wine caucus of the government: members Tim Hudak, Tom Froese, Frank Sheehan, Bart Maves and Jack Carroll.

1400

ORAL QUESTIONS

PORK INDUSTRY

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. A few moments ago you were on national television rightly commenting on the disastrous situation that pork producers in Ontario are currently facing. Earlier this week, in response to a question from a member of this Legislature, you indicated that

the government of Ontario was monitoring the situation and preparing to take action.

Would you stand in your place today, recognizing the gruesome situation that producers and others are now experiencing in the pork sector particularly, and bring the House up to date on specific plans you have to aid what you yourself have rightly called a disastrous situation facing Ontario pork producers?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my honourable colleague from Renfrew North. We do have a disastrous situation in the pork industry in Ontario, as they have across Canada and indeed across the world.

We have met with the pork producers. As a matter of fact, we spent almost two hours together with the Ontario pork executive last night — myself and our rural caucus. I have been in constant contact with my federal colleague the Honourable Lyle Vanclief, who was in cabinet this morning looking at the support that may well be available and the kind of program he will be setting forth.

We will definitely be participating in that program and we want to make absolutely sure that Ontario's producers get their fair share of federal money.

Mr Conway: Are you prepared, Minister, to stand in your place today and tell Ontario's pork producers and the related agribusiness that the Ontario government will match, dollar for dollar, the assistance we expect to be forthcoming from the government of Canada? And as a supplementary, are you prepared, as a provincial government in Ontario, to match the special funding offered by the Quebec provincial government to Quebec pork producers, which my colleagues from eastern Ontario tell me now runs at approximately \$69 per sow?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: It is \$69 per market hog, not per sow. However, that is something that is different in the province of Quebec than it is here in Ontario. Ontario's pork producers have suffered countervail in the past. All Quebec pork is processed in Quebec, therefore they are selling pork and not live hogs. We sell live hogs here in Ontario because we are an exporting province, and we ship hogs to Quebec and to the US. Therefore, if we mirrored the Quebec situation, we would be up for countervail immediately. We cannot afford countervail. We must bring dollars to our pork producers because they are presently losing some \$60 per animal that goes to market, and you cannot tolerate that for very long.

When you ask me to match dollar for dollar, it's my understanding that the formula will soon come forth from Ottawa and it will be somewhere close to 60-40. So for me to tell you we'll match dollar for dollar — we will meet the requirements of the federal government, provided they're not countervailable.

Mr Conway: Minister, pork producers in my part of eastern Ontario, which is also your part of the province, are faced with the actions of the Quebec government. They have taken measures which clearly favour their pork producers and we had better, as a provincial government

in Ontario, provide real assistance to our producers and do so in a timely fashion.

Given the gruesome situation in Ontario today, where reports are now coming in that pork producers facing unprecedented collapse in prices are shooting and gassing piglets and sows — it's come to that, apparently — what we need to know is: As members of this Legislature and as the community beyond, what specific measures are you prepared to take; and will you stand here today and tell us that these beleaguered and increasingly desperate pork producers in Ontario are going to get real and meaningful assistance before they are all out of business?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I reiterate what I said in a previous answer: Yes, we will be there to support financially our pork producers.

The federal government I believe must take the lead here because this is a problem that covers all of Canada. Yes, it has repercussions to our grain and feed dealers and of course to the entire agriculture industry. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture has been lobbying the Liberal government of Canada for the last three months. They are now getting action, and as soon as the program is set forth, I can assure all my colleagues that the Ontario government will be there to support its farmers in the pork industry.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My second question is to the Minister of Health, and it concerns one of the leading killers in Ontario, namely, cancer. To follow up on a discussion my leader had with the minister yesterday, I want to know why it is that over eight months have passed since the cancer clinics of this province submitted to your department a supplementary budget request of \$16.4 million, and as of today Cancer Care Ontario tells me they have not had an official confirmation that the \$16.4-million request will be granted. Minister, can you explain why it is and how it is that eight months after that request went to you, the cancer clinics of this province have not gotten the green light on all of that \$16.4 million worth of supplementary requests?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I would just like to remind the member that it was our government that set up Cancer Care Ontario. Our objective was to ensure that we coordinated the treatments and access to services. As you know, prior to the establishment of Cancer Care Ontario, there were different levels of access and treatment of cancer throughout the province. We now have in place the CCO. We have in place the areas throughout the province where money is provided. We have approved their budget for this year and we are continuing to work with them in order to ensure that the appropriate level of funding is provided in the required areas that they have indicated to us are necessary.

Mr Conway: Minister, there is good work being done, to be sure, but let me come back to the statistics provided to this assembly some months ago by Cancer Care Ontario. Cancer is now the leading cause of premature deaths in this province. There are something like 45,000

new diagnoses of cancer on an annual basis in this province; 23,000 people will die in Ontario this year because of cancer. That's more than the population of the city of Owen Sound.

My questions remains: Given the urgency and the severity of the cancer challenge to the people of Ontario and the widespread concern in all quarters about the terror of cancer, can you explain how it is that eight months after Cancer Care Ontario, on behalf of the clinics, providers and caregivers, asked you for \$16.4 million of additional funding to help with additional radiation treatment, to help with additional supportive services, to help with additional anti-cancer drugs, to name but three items, how it is possible, in light of the urgency of this challenge, that your government has not yet found time to approve that relatively small supplementary request?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have approved the request from Cancer Care Ontario for \$142 million. We are working with them on their additional request because we want to be absolutely certain that all money provided is going to patient services and not to administrative activities. I also need to remind you that we have made a commitment to three additional cancer centres in this province. There had been no reinvestment. There had been no increased access in this province to any cancer centres throughout Ontario. We now are in a position where we're going to have increased access for patients in Durham and Mississauga, and the commission also recommended another cancer centre in Kitchener-Waterloo.

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Mr Conway: The \$142 million that the minister refers to is the base budget from last year. My point remains. You have been asked for \$16.4-million additional dollars to meet the rising tide of requests and pressures within the system. Eight months after you got that request, you have not answered that request in any positive way. The cancer clinics need \$16.4 million to meet additional pressures. They've had to wait for eight months. They still don't have a positive answer.

My question, not just to the minister but to her government, is: How is that they don't have an answer for their request, yet your government can find an additional \$47 million to spend on government advertising that is literally blanketing the province, while the waiting lists at these cancer clinics grow and while the drug therapies are in abeyance because there is no money? Isn't it a crime and a shame that your government has money for all kinds of propagandistic government advertising, and eight months after you've got the request, you haven't been able to tell the cancer clinics they're going to get the supplementary budgets they need to help manage the rising tide of cancer treatment that is growing in this province?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite obviously forgets the improvements we're seeing in this province when it comes to reduction of waiting lists and providing accessibility to services. I quote to you from the Toronto Star on July 23, 1998, where the Star says that cancer waiting lists "were in a crisis situation in the late 1980s." I believe that's when your government was in office. It

says they were in a crisis situation in the early 1990s, "when there were only 15 radiation machines to service Metro cancer patients, forcing some" — under your government and the NDP — "to go up north. Currently," the article says, "there are 27 machines."

We are doing more for cancer patients in this province at the present time than any previous government. We are going to make sure that every cent that goes to cancer goes to patient services. That's why recently we have announced new money for pediatric oncology.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Premier. I want to talk to you about keeping promises. This is with respect to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. On May 24, 1995, you wrote a letter to David Baker and to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee in which you said that a Harris government would be willing to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act in its first term of office. You also said, "I would be pleased to work together with your committee" — meaning the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee — "in development of such legislation."

Premier, I know you're going to tell me that your minister and her parliamentary assistant have met with these groups, and with the ODA Committee in particular, on a number of occasions. But they've written to you on a number of occasions when this bill has been stalled and slowed down and when they feared that it wouldn't come through and they've asked to meet with you. Now, I've got to tell you, they describe the legislation that has been introduced as a kick in the stomach. They don't have faith in your minister; they really want to meet with you. Would you be willing to live up to this promise and meet with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): As you have indicated, I have lived up to my commitment and my promise that our government would introduce an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I indicated as well that we would work with the group. I believe that there now have been 10 meetings with either the minister or the parliamentary assistant and I say this: While the group might argue that the bill is not the bill they would draft and doesn't go as far as they would like, I think it's important to note that it is absolutely the first of its kind in Canada. It puts the most onerous requirements on the public sector, sending a signal that we want to work our way through this ourselves, before it is completely compulsory for the private sector. It requires government to review over 600 pieces of legislation, thousands of government initiatives and, if passed, it puts it into legislation for the very first time in the history of Ontario and indeed for the first time anywhere across Canada.

Ms Lankin: Premier, I know that's what the briefing note from the ministry says. You already had an obligation as a government under the charter to review all legislation

and bring it in line with provisions of the charter and the Human Rights Code.

There is nothing new in this legislation. It is not a step forward and, Premier, I've got to tell you, there is nothing in the legislation that compels you to do anything after you've reviewed these 600 pieces of legislation, acts, policies etc. You've got to take a real step here and you've got to listen to people. It's not just a group. Please, don't dismiss them. There are a million and a half people with disabilities in this province. These people and all of their organizations are saying this legislation is a dismal failure and it doesn't deserve the name, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Premier, please, would you just make one commitment here today? Would you commit to meet with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee and at least listen to them yourselves so you can see if they make sense, common sense, in the argument they are putting forward?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me say, this government has taken more initiatives and more actions than any other government in Ontario's history and indeed any other government across Canada.

We brought in the Ontario disabilities support program. For the first time, we took disabled people off welfare, where you let them languish. Your government and the Liberal government and former governments for the 10 years of your two parties let them languish. We've created a separate program there with the support of your party, and I think you in particular.

We have had more people with disabilities, including a former New Democratic member who came forward and said of the move that we made, "This is the biggest breakthrough in the history of the Ontario Legislature." That's a former NDP member of the government who couldn't get you to move when you were in office.

Yes, I have written to Mr Lepofsky. I have indicated there will be ample opportunities. We're interested in more dialogue. This bill will work its way through the process. But I tell you this: It may not be perfect in your terms, but it's —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms Lankin: Premier, I have a copy of your letter to Mr Lepofsky. It arrived today. I have the copy here. You completely ignored the central request they made, which was just to meet with you. Yesterday, you were fine to meet with people in Vaughan and have breakfast around a kitchen table and talk to folks. That's OK. Of course, it was a photo op. If they brought the cameras, would you be prepared to meet with them then?

Let me be serious here. I want you to please make a commitment that you will meet with these people, that you will listen to their concerns. They could tell you a whole lot of other things your government has done that have set back persons with disabilities. But that's not what the debate is about.

The debate is about a commitment you made for an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and everyone understood to some extent what that would contain. What you've

introduced is a sham in comparison. Premier, beyond anything else, if you want to be accountable to people, if you want to be accountable for your promises, you should at least be prepared to meet with them and to say face to face what your answer is. Will you meet with these people, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: I think that the member has acknowledged, even in the question, that I have lived up to my commitment to introduce the act, to consult, to continue to consult, to take a leadership role for the first time in Canada.

I don't know how this member particularly has the nerve, after five years of doing nothing, after five years of Gary Malkowski begging you to do something, a member of your own caucus, and now he has come forward and said this Progressive Conservative government has done more for people with disabilities than any government has in the history of Ontario, including his own of which he was a member.

So for you to come forward now — the first time in Canada. I've put the bill there. The decision-making people are the committee, and I invite those people to meet with the committee members who will, with an open mind, as the minister has and as the parliamentary assistant has, work this bill through the parliamentary process.

Ms Lankin: Mister Accessibility, Mister Accountability. You won't even meet with them.

The Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine. I caution the member for Beaches-Woodbine to come to order, please.

New question, leader of the third party.

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PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is also for the Premier. It's interesting that the Premier is so afraid to meet with disabled people in the province of Ontario.

My question is about the closing of psychiatric hospitals in Ontario. This is your quote, Premier, from the North Bay Nugget:

"We are woefully behind in providing community support for ex-psychiatric patients. All those community supports must be in place long before you would ever look at closing down a facility."

Two thirds, or eight months, of the fiscal year is now over and all that your government has invested in community supports for mental health is \$20 million, just \$20 million.

Glenn Thompson, the Ontario director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, says that in view of your closure of hospitals and the shutdown of other services, at least \$300 million is required in community supports and community services.

Premier, will you make a commitment today that you won't close a single psychiatric hospital bed until and only until the community supports are in place? Will you make that guarantee?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I have made that commitment in Thunder Bay, in North Bay, in London, in every part of this province. I said exactly what you quoted. We are woefully behind in providing community supports thanks to 10 years of inaction and five years of your government's inaction in doing so.

The proposal from the restructuring commission is a recommendation at this point in time. That proposal, which is receiving input now from various — I understand the city of North Bay is generally supportive of the direction, but we will wait until that information is in.

That proposal suggests the North Bay Psychiatric Hospital, in its current form, the old one, should close some time around 2003 or 2004, after the new hospital wing is built with the new general hospital, after all the community supports are put in place. That is exactly our commitment.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I want to take you a bit further on this because you need to be pinned down. The North Bay Psychiatric Hospital has 307 beds. Last year, 330 new patients were admitted into those beds and 545 patients came back for further treatment. That's 900 psychiatric admissions for that year alone.

Let's take this a bit further. Your government has said 117 beds will be added to the general hospital in North Bay and 31 beds to Sudbury-Algoma. That still leaves at least 200 North Bay psychiatric patients with no place to go.

Premier, your government has not put community supports in place. You've made all kinds of phony announcements. Please tell us, where do the 200 patients who are left out of the equation go in North Bay?

Hon Mr Harris: The member says that my government has said. My government has said nothing. My minister has said nothing. I have said nothing. To date, we have a report and a recommendation from the Health Services Restructuring Commission which made recommendation of what should be in place in 2003-04, four or five years hence. If you wish to comment on that, I know they'd be happy to hear your comments, as they are from the professionals, as they are from the unions, as they are from the patients, as they are from the city of North Bay.

The only thing that you got right is that we are investing where you cut. You cut \$60 million out of psychiatric hospitals and you put not one penny of that money into community care or into community supports. All you did was cut and we're playing catch-up to your cuts. Yes, we're putting more money in there.

Mr Hampton: The record will show that the ministers of health under the NDP government — one of whom is seated here to my left, and Ruth Grier — in fact began the investment in community services. As soon as you became the government you cut it. Don't try to tell people any other story.

The real question is, what happens to the 200 people in North Bay that you don't want to account for?

Let me read to you a letter from a constituent, Mr Lee Mantha. It's a letter from your colleague Ernie Eves. It says:

"Dear Lee,

"I am writing in response to your question of me at the Almaguin Highlands all-candidates debate regarding Mike Harris's comments about the North Bay psychiatric facility. Subsequent to the meeting, I have spoken directly to Mike, at which time I inquired about his position in this regard. Mike has assured me that at no time has he stated any intention to close psychiatric facilities in North Bay or elsewhere in the province."

Premier, the North Bay Psychiatric Hospital is full, funding for mental health services doesn't exist, community supports aren't in place and you still haven't accounted for the 200 people you left out of the equation. What's your answer now to Lee Mantha?

Hon Mr Harris: I am well on the record as saying that I thought it was time that an old, outdated, inefficient, wasteful hospital, falling apart, with hallways bigger than patient rooms, like the North Bay Psychiatric Hospital, to serve all of northeastern Ontario needs to be replaced with new facilities. I am well on the record on that.

I was on the record supporting the report that came in when the Liberals were in office in 1986 that said exactly that. It sat there through 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990. Then it sat there when you were in office, through 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995. Now, finally, we have a government with the guts to put more money and new facilities and new programs into place after 10 years of inaction by two of the most abysmal governments Ontario has ever seen in the history of the province.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier, and it's on the issue of Ipperwash. We spent nine months using some outside lawyers to finally get some valuable information released that shows that one of the problems at Ipperwash was the fact that you had no policy on First Nations. This finally released document says, "Actions to be taken" — this is two days after the shooting death of Dudley George — "the government create interim messages until the government's position on aboriginal issues is determined... establish an aboriginal policy framework by October 2" — and this is important; it says, "NB, the fact that the government is working on this should not be part of any message." In other words, you had no policy. You tried to develop it after the fact, behind closed doors, secretly.

My question is this: How in the world could the people who were attempting to manage this extremely sensitive issue at Ipperwash possibly handle this issue if you and your government had no policy dealing with aboriginal issues?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Attorney General is —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Attorney General.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The response that was made was a very concrete response. We attempted to

obtain a civil injunction. That was a fast response. The documentation was prepared by legal counsel. It was served. Certainly that response was a realistic response to try to peacefully end this situation. That was the approach of the government. That was the direct response that was made.

Mr Phillips: The Premier has just left the House.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Scarborough-Agincourt, you're not allowed to comment on a member's attendance in the House. I would caution you.

1430

Mr Phillips: Let me just be very direct on this. A First Nations person died. The government had no policy, two days after the shooting, as you can see by information that took us nine months, using volunteer lawyers, to finally drag out into the public. What it shows to the public is that one of the major problems was that the government had no policy to deal with it, that people trying to deal with this sensitive issue had no idea of what Mike Harris was all about, other than some closed-door meetings where Mike might have been talking to his executive assistant. It says here very clearly, "Create interim messages." In other words, do something until the government arrives at a position on aboriginal issues. "Establish an aboriginal policy framework by October 2," and keep all of this quiet. Don't let anybody know you don't have a policy on it.

Nothing could be more serious than this. I charge you that one of the problems was that you gave no direction to the people trying to handle this. You had no policy, and after the fact you tried to hide it from the public. I ask again: Why did you have no policy to deal with the native issue and the burial ground claim of the First Nations? Why did you try and hide the fact and why did you take a month after the fact to develop that policy?

Hon Mr Harnick: The member is quite right. There was no direction that was being given to anyone. This was an incident that involved a policing matter. The police dealt with the incident. The appropriate response from the government was to seek a civil injunction. That's what we did.

In terms of disclosure, production of documents has been made. There are civil actions. There are ongoing claims. There are matters before the courts. Evidence has been adduced before the courts and certainly all matters in this situation have appropriately been made public in accordance with those cases. The response of the government was completely appropriate.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A further question to the Premier. You're spending tens of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on partisan political advertising. In one of the ads you're saying that people deserve to know where their political leaders stand on the issues of health care. I happen to agree with that statement: People deserve to know. Premier, will you show the courage to have a public debate on health care? Forget about your

American spin doctors. Will you show the courage to have a public debate on health care?

The Ontario Nurses' Association has agreed to sponsor the debate. I'm sure we can find a television station that would carry the debate. Premier, I know you love these debates, because before the last election you debated Lyn McLeod and Bob Rae five times. Premier, if it was OK to debate five times before the last election, show the courage now to have a public debate on health care.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know that the member is interested in talking about advertising and let me respond to that part of your preamble. We were asked by a number of people, by a number of editorialists, by the public saying, "We'd like to know more about what you're doing and why you're doing it." We have responded. We responded with a series of pamphlets and ads that invite response, that say, "Here are the facts, give us the response." I tell you that we would not respond to the kind of pap —

Interjections.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Speaker, you have got the nomination. Show them your power.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Stop the clock. That was subtle. Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I'm happy that you're so interested in one of five posters that were made that actually cost less than \$100. But the issue here, Premier —

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: Premier, the issue is health care. You say that the people of Ontario deserve to know where their political leaders stand on the issue of health care. It's impossible to debate you in here, because so far this fall you've been here four times. You've got the worst attendance record of any Premier in Canada.

What we're saying, Premier, is simply this: It would only take an hour of your time — that's all people are asking for, an hour of your time — to debate and discuss for the public this serious issue of health care. That's less time than it takes a teacher to sit down with two classes. One hour of your time. Rather than spending tens of millions of dollars on partisan political advertising, have the courage to face the people of Ontario in a public debate about health care.

Hon Mr Harris: I wish the member would keep the question more focused, because I can't resist talking about your \$10-million "Smile, Ontario" campaign. Mr Speaker, I apologize for the prop, but I think most people thought he looked better with the beard. The voting was two to one on that.

Let's get back to the issue of health care policies. It's pretty clear where I stand. I've put my policies forward. Let me say, in respect to the leader of the New Democratic Party, that I will acknowledge you have had the courage to put forward your position and your policies, and I have offered to host the debate myself. I've offered to have the Speaker host it. I've offered to have it in the Legislature. I offered to be here, I offered to have it here. All I asked for was one thing. I asked, since this is a three-party Legislature, that the Liberal Party follow my lead

and your lead and actually come out with some policy, because I agree with Alex Cullen. The reason he left that party is that they don't have, and don't appear to ever want to have, any policies.

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AIR QUALITY

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. As you are aware, last April I tabled a resolution in the Legislature calling for the federal government to regulate the sulphur content of gasoline and protect the air quality of Ontario. In October, I'm pleased to say, the federal Minister of the Environment listened to the people of Ontario and announced the intention of the federal government to lower the allowable level of sulphur in gasoline sold in Canada.

Minister, I understand that on Tuesday of this week you attended the Environment and Energy Conference of Ontario. Can you tell us what this conference is about and how it will help in protecting Ontario's environment?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): November 24 and 25 marked the fifth annual environmental EECO conference. This year's theme was "Solutions that don't cost the earth."

The conference in which the Ministry of the Environment is a primary sponsor, along with 12 other participating sponsors, provides for business groups and non-profit groups to come together to try to forge new solutions to old environmental problems.

Some of the topics the conference examined were benefits of industry and government partnerships; taking new products to market; how Canada and Ontario are responding to global warming and the challenges and opportunities global warming presents to technology, business and industry.

Some of the key speakers included Minister Jim Wilson of Energy, Science and Technology and James Seif, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. They also recognized the successful partners in our Partners in Air program. This was a great —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary, please.

Mr Ouellette: Minister, you mentioned the Partners in Air program and how this was an example of government, local schools and industry working together to protect the environment.

I know that in my riding of Oshawa people are very concerned about the environment and want to be thankful for your commitment and help in projects such as the completion of the Durham Trail.

Oshawa has participated and done very well in national Communities in Bloom programs and volunteer support for many environmental initiatives such as the Lakeshore Wetlands and the Second Marsh.

Minister, can you explain to my constituents how the Partners in Air program works?

Hon Mr Sterling: The Partners in Air program is quite an innovative example of this ministry's and this government's concern with regard to air quality.

Partners in Air is a program which links students in high schools, industries and the Ministry of the Environment together. What happens is the high school students study air quality, they take measurements, monitor the air and put those results on a Web site in which they can share with each other.

This is a public-private sector partnership so all of the costs of this program are not paid through the taxpayers. We have asked companies to come forward to participate in this, and I am glad that we could honour at our conference Shell Canada, General Motors, Petro-Canada, Dofasco and Ontario Hydro who are putting up at least \$40,000 towards this program.

As the members of the House know, air quality is one of our government's top priorities. Partners in Air is one of our government's top priorities. Partners in Air is just another example of it.

PORK INDUSTRY

Mr Peter North (Elgin): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I too would like to speak to the minister with regard to the pork producers of Ontario.

One of the concerns that was raised earlier in the Legislature is a concern with regard to Quebec. In Quebec there is to some degree, I guess, some sort of false bottom has been created in terms of price.

Yesterday, when I spoke to one of the pork producers in my particular riding of Elgin, a gentleman from Belmont, one of the things he was concerned about was that this false bottom or this low-end price that Quebec would support and sustain for its pork producers could create a problem in and of itself for Ontario pork producers in that pork producers in Quebec would have a feeling that they would never go below that bottom level, that there could be no complete fallout like there is Ontario at this point with regard to the industry.

This creates somewhat of an inequity or at least a concern or appearance of inequity between the people who are producing pork in Ontario and the people who produce pork in Quebec.

Can you, as minister, tell me what the Ministry of Agriculture in Ontario is doing to make sure that inequity does not create a crisis in and of itself in the pork production in Ontario?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my honourable colleague from Elgin for that question. We discussed that at some length with members of the executive of Ontario Pork last night.

The concern they have is that the level of support in the province of Quebec could maintain some very, very low prices for a longer period of time than would be normal in the cycle that we're quite used to in the pork industry.

We here in Ontario have the safety nets: the NISA program and the GRIP, and those are normally sufficient to meet the low cycle as it normally was. This cycle is considerably lower than normal because we are now at disaster prices.

The government of Canada, I believe, will be setting forth a program that will be spread over possibly 18 to 24 months in order to bring the situation back to normal, where supply and demand equate to some degree, also hoping that there will be some purchases from Asia, as there have been over the past number of years. They have reduced very considerably. That is also affecting the province.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr North: The second question that I have is, I think, somewhat similar in nature. During the ice storm that we had in the earliest part of the year, the province of Ontario made some unilateral decisions in terms of funding and in terms of crisis support for the people of eastern Ontario and some help in Quebec as well.

In this situation, one of the people I spoke to yesterday from the west part of the riding, in west Elgin, was concerned that our minister would wait and come hand in hand with the federal government with funding to help the people who are in trouble with regard to this crisis. The concern that this particular gentleman raised is that sometimes the federal government does not always move as fast as perhaps it could in terms of bringing this funding ahead. He asked me if I could ask you basically: What is your cut-off date? What is the date where you will simply move ahead unilaterally and help support the pork producers of Ontario?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: First, we have to get the signal from Ottawa just exactly what their formula will be in the program that I'm sure will be announced in the near future. Through the ministry we have been discussing with financial institutions a short stop-gap measure to provide some operating funds in the immediate future. Over the longer period of time, we will certainly be sitting with the people from the pork industry.

Countervail is always a problem and it was brought up on a number of occasions last night. We must make sure that we do not wind up in a countervailable situation. Quebec is very different and it would take a long time to explain. I think a lot of the people here do understand that.

We're going to proceed as swiftly as we can. I do not have a cut-off date. I certainly have some targets. It's urgent and I realize the urgency and we will be moving with promptness.

LANDFILL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. This morning a report in the Globe and Mail outlined a number of potential serious difficulties with a landfill site in the Toronto area. We saw that in at least three landfill sites residents in that particular area were exposed to harmful chemicals, very dangerous chemicals to people's health.

This brings me to the question: What is going into the landfill sites? What controls do we have on those? What is our ability to control the dangerous gases and other chemicals from landfill sites across Ontario and the health crisis that could cause in those neighbourhoods to the people living there? What is of major concern, of course, is vinyl chloride, which is associated with brain, lung and other types of cancers.

Minister, there is concern about the fact that, to my understanding, residents in the area affected were not notified, when your ministry knew that there were concerns there. They're also concerned about the fact that this development barrier that had been placed around the Britannia landfill site was taken off by your ministry without any evidence from your own ministry information that would show us that it was safe to do so. Can you outline what steps you took to notify the residents and why the protected area for development was lifted by your ministry?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): We are of course very concerned about landfill sites and the air quality around them. That's why we have introduced new standards with regard to landfill sites. All large, new landfill sites that are built must collect landfill gas now.

This result relates to 1994. I hope the member realizes that in 1994 this result was taken. The information was checked. All of the regulations of the ministry were found to be in place. A memorandum of understanding was signed between the municipalities, ratepayers groups. They were all given the information with regard to the results and the previous government signed a memorandum of understanding allowing this development to go ahead.

Mr Agostino: Minister, there appears to be ongoing concern about the safety not only in this area but generally of landfill sites across Ontario. If this has happened here, clearly it could be happening at the hundreds of other sites that we have across this province. My concern is that we still do not have a mechanism, first of all, for monitoring what is happening around those sites. These tests occurred here as a result of complaints by residents.

The concern is, what is happening at these other sites? How are we monitoring what is going on in these sites, what materials are going in? And what is the effect of these materials, if it is clear, even by your own ministry admission, that we do not yet have the type of technology today that could guarantee safety and that these gases do not escape and cause harm to people in the community?

I think it is important for your ministry to immediately undertake a review of all the areas around landfill sites right across Ontario to ascertain whether or not these same types of concerns exist at other landfill sites and to ensure that we take the steps to protect residents.

Will you today give the House the assurance that you will undertake to study right across Ontario every single landfill site.

Hon Mr Sterling: Each municipality which hosts the particular landfill site is required to take a significant

amount of air quality sample tests. Each of those tests is checked by my ministry, and if there is a concern, the municipality or the private owner of those particular sites is called in and they deal with it with regard to their certificate of approval, which they require to operate this site. Under no circumstances, with regard to these gases, has my ministry had a failure in terms of the tests they've done.

I have contacted the mayors within all the municipalities with regard to the three sites that are mentioned in this article and have offered them our air quality monitoring if they should want to have some additional testing done.

We're very concerned about this, we're on top of it all the time and we will continue to improve the system, as we have in the recent past.

1450

SCHOOL BOARD DISPUTE

Mr Blain K. Morin (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Today in the members' gallery is Mr Bert Rollings, president of CUPE local 5555. Minister, the Canadian Union of Public Employees has asked you to appoint a commission of inquiry into the conduct and policies of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. This request is receiving broad support, especially in the community of Peterborough.

One reason for their request is the conduct of the board's superintendent of business, Ron Sudds. Mr Sudds recently recommended that the board accept a bid from benefits consultants Buffet Taylor despite a staff report supporting a lower bid. Mr Sudds later admitted to having received from Buffet Taylor tickets to Blue Jays and Maple Leafs games, and to attend the 1996 US Open on a weekend junket organized by that company.

Minister, do you agree with the Premier after his New York trip that this type of junket is a normal part of doing business, or are you going to support, positively, CUPE's call for an inquiry?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I'm unaware of the circumstances. If any improprieties have occurred, I'm sure the local authorities would be more than happy to look into the matter. Beyond that, it's really impossible for me to make any other observations on a situation that I'm not fully aware of.

These kinds of matters, in terms of tenders, in general are under the control and authority of local school boards at the school level. I'm only speculating because I haven't seen any of the details. There may be reasons why a particular tender has a better quality as opposed to a better price, has more experience or whatever, so those are generally best left to local authorities to deal with, because they know the community and the local circumstances. However, if there are any improprieties, raise them with the local enforcement personnel. I'm sure they'll be happy to look into it.

Mr Blain Morin: You have the right under section 10 of the Education Act to investigate the conduct and policies of that school board.

Minister, this was delivered to you November 26 by fax and is being followed up to you. There are also over 100 newspaper articles, regarding the misconduct, asking you for that inquiry. That's not the only problem out in Peterborough.

You created cutbacks and a cutback environment in the local school boards. You may want them to operate in a more businesslike way, according to your thinking, or the way you think business operates. You want them to make money where they can, but after the amalgamation of the Pine Ridge board, it eliminated the community education program and laid off five staff members. A separate corporation, the community training and development centre, was set up, and surprisingly, the president of that centre is also the director of education. All this was done behind closed doors.

When questioned, Vicki Clarke, the education coordinator, was fired. She's in attendance today too.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Hon David Johnson: I'm not quite certain what the member is alleging, but if there are improprieties, if the member is alleging inside dealing or influence or whatever, then by all means, feel free to raise it with the proper enforcement authorities. I'm sure they would look into it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon David Johnson: The third party is quite fond of alleging corruption etc without any facts. There may be facts in this particular case. My door is open. I receive comments from all members of the House. Feel free to send them over. Certainly the ministry staff will have a look at them. But at the same time, if you're alleging corruption or something that should be dealt with by the local police, then I say to you, don't waste any time, bring it to the authority of the local police as well.

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Among the areas that you are responsible for is the Niagara Escarpment. I think all members of this House would agree with my view that the Niagara Escarpment represents one of this province's most significant and beautiful natural features, topped off of course by the incomparable Shangri-La that is Hamilton Mountain. It's my understanding that among the changes made by Bill 25, which is the latest red tape bill, are changes to the Niagara Escarpment in terms of plan amendments and development permits. As you're well aware, Minister, changes to the act that protects the escarpment are obviously a sensitive subject. Can you please tell us what the reaction has been to these changes?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to thank the member for Hamilton

Mountain for the question. I believe he's quite correct that most of the people in Ontario recognize the Niagara Escarpment as a very important feature in Ontario. It stretches some 725 kilometres from Queenston to Tobermory and has been recognized internationally for its ecological importance.

The member is further correct that any changes to the plan that protects this feature for future generations are a very sensitive subject and must be undertaken carefully with a maximum of consultation and discussion amongst all of the stakeholders.

I'd like to recognize the work of my parliamentary assistant, the member for Halton North, Mr Ted Chudleigh, for his fine work in this area. He has done an outstanding job. The challenge the NEC faced was to develop amendments to the act that would remove the red tape barriers that have been the subject of complaints by those who work with the NEC without compromising the protection the plan provides. It's a real challenge and we have met that challenge.

Mr Pettit: Would you inform the House, and for that matter the people of Hamilton Mountain, of the reaction of some of the stakeholders to these changes, reaction especially that would support your contention that changes made to the legislation that protects the Niagara Escarpment will indeed reduce red tape while at the same time maintaining protection?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The comments that we've heard from some of the stakeholders in this area are very informative. For instance, I can read a letter from the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth that says, "Recent initiatives by the Niagara Escarpment Commission to streamline the process for plan amendments and development permits through improving legislation and regulations without detriment to the integrity of the plan are commendable and long overdue."

We have letters like that from the regional municipality of Niagara, from the township of Mono and on and on. A variety of people have said, "This is the right action for the Niagara Escarpment." They agree that my parliamentary assistant, Ted Chudleigh, has done outstanding work on this feature. I hope members of this House will support Bill 25 this afternoon.

1500

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is for the Minister of Health. I have in my hand a petition signed by over 6,000 people, in addition to the over 60,000 people who have signed previous petitions, asking that Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines be kept open. You may be aware that the Hotel Dieu has a wonderful oncology clinic where chemotherapy is provided to cancer patients, a kidney dialysis unit that treats those who have afflictions with their kidneys, a palliative care unit, a diabetes program, an autistic people's program and an emergency department, all of which are essential to the city of St Catharines and the region of Niagara.

Your commission, the hospital destruction commission, set up by the Premier, has ordered the doors shut on the Hotel Dieu Hospital. I'm asking the minister today, will you assure the people of St Catharines that you will not close the Hotel Dieu Hospital but that it will be allowed to stay open and continue to provide these essential services?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As the member knows, the Health Services Restructuring Commission has issued its interim directions. There is now an opportunity for the community and individual residents to make their response to the commission. Certainly, I know the commission welcomes the input it is receiving.

Mr Bradley: Despite Mike Harris's promise during the last election campaign — I'll quote him: "Certainly, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." Despite that solemn promise by the Premier, your hand-picked hospital closing commission has, as I said, slammed the doors shut on the Hotel Dieu Hospital. That is its recommendation, that this highly regarded and essential health care facility, with its life-saving cancer treatment and kidney dialysis centres, be closed.

People who wish to register objections to the commission's report were given just a month to make a written submission, and forced to use a format that is virtually impossible for the average person to comply with. I know you are bound and determined to bolt the doors and board up the windows on hospitals before the next election, but surely people deserve a reasonable time to be heard. Will you now extend the deadline for submissions to the commission regarding the Niagara recommendations past tomorrow and at least to the end of December?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's very important to recognize that our government is strengthening health services in this province. Certainly, a reflection of that is the fact that the community in Niagara has actually received more than \$51 million since 1995-96. That includes \$11.6 million for additional community services; it includes \$5.8 million for additional cardiac, dialysis, trauma and MRI; it includes \$8 million for hospital restructuring reimbursement. The level of service and the access to service is increasing in Niagara region with this additional investment of \$51 million.

PETITIONS

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Following up on my colleague for St Catharines's petition, I submit this for the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines. It reads like this:

"We, the undersigned, oppose the proposed closure of Niagara's only denominational hospital, and the devastating effect that proposal will have on patients and potential patients from across the region. We ask that the health services restructuring committee reassess its recommendations for the Niagara region and ensure quality accessi-

bility and affordability through a continued role for Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I will affix my signature. I'm in full agreement with this petition.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition here signed by 355 people in my riding of Scarborough Centre. It was presented to me at Chine Drive Public School. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 138 schools across Toronto are candidates for closing due to changes in provincial funding formulas;

"We, the community of Chine Drive Public School, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure funding is available to prevent the closing of schools.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows."

It's signed by 355 people and I'm presenting it on their behalf today.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a further petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. There are over 700 signatures on this one here.

"Whereas due to the Harris funding cuts to education the Toronto Catholic district school board is being forced to consider the closing of 29 Catholic elementary schools in the city of Toronto before next September; and

"Whereas the parents of the students at St Gaspar school do not want the school to be closed because it is operating at full capacity, and fear the further chaos and crisis the Harris government is imposing on the education of their children; and

"Whereas there is apprehension and turmoil in the community that due to government rules to determine school capacity hundreds of students will have to find a new school come next September;

"Now, therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We call upon the Minister of Education, who has the primary responsibility for providing a quality education for each and every student in Ontario, to:

"1. Listen to the views being expressed by the teachers and parents of St Gaspar school students who are concerned on the implication and disruptive effects the school closure will have on their children;

"2. Recognize the fundamental importance of our schools to our neighbourhood's community;

"3. Live up to its commitment to provide adequate funding for the important and essential components of a good education and not allow the closing of St Gaspar school because it's operating to full capacity."

I concur with the signators and I will affix my signature to it as well.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 49 people.

"Whereas most Ontario residents do not have adequate access to effective hospice palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force from all regions of Ontario be appointed to develop a hospice palliative care bill of rights that would ensure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include hospice palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a group of petitions signed by over 6,000 people in St Catharines that read as follows:

"We, the undersigned, oppose the proposed closure of Niagara's only denominational hospital and the devastating effect that proposal will have on the patients and potential patients from across the region. We ask that the health services restructuring committee reassess its recommendations for the Niagara region and ensure quality accessibility and affordability through a continued role for Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with the contents of these petitions.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas it is important to honour the courageous memory and sacrifices of Canada's war dead and of our veterans who fought in defence of our national rights and freedoms;

"Whereas there is a need for succeeding generations of young, school-age Canadians to learn more about the true meaning of Remembrance Day;

"Whereas Ontario veterans' associations have created excellent educational materials for use in Ontario schools on the meaning and significance of Remembrance Day;

"Whereas a special Remembrance Day curriculum for all grades in Ontario's education system, developed on the basis of the programs by Ontario veterans' associations and involving their direct participation, would increase awareness of and appreciation for Canada's wartime sacrifices in the hearts and minds of all Ontario citizens;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial Ministry of Education and Training ensure that a suitable Remembrance Day learning unit be included in the curriculum of all grades of Ontario's educational system."

I support the petition and I affix my signature.

1510

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas red light cameras can dramatically assist in reducing the number of injuries and deaths resulting from red light runners; and

"Whereas red light cameras only take pictures of licence plates, thus reducing privacy concerns; and

"Whereas all revenues from violations can be easily directed to a designated fund to improve safety at high-collision intersections; and

"Whereas there is a growing disregard for traffic laws, resulting in serious injury to pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and especially children and seniors; and

"Whereas the provincial government has endorsed the use of a similar camera system to collect tolls on the new 407 tollway; and

"Whereas mayors and concerned citizens across Ontario have been seeking permission to deploy these cameras due to limited police resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario support the installation of red light cameras at high-collision intersections to monitor and prosecute motorists who run red lights."

I agree with the petition, and I affix my name to it.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Upper Grand District School Board has identified nine schools to be closed in their district, one of them being Arthur District High School; and

"Whereas the Upper Grand District School Board has not satisfied the stakeholders in Arthur District High School of the educational or financial benefits of closing the school;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to stop the closure of this school immediately."

It's signed by many hundreds of residents of Arthur and area, and I support it as well, and I affix my signature to it.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a further petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It says, "Say no to the privatization of health care."

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario;

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale;

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario;

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not privatize our health care services."

I concur, and I will affix my signature to it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised in the Common Sense Revolution to maintain health care spending at no less than \$17.4 billion annually; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has exceeded that spending floor every year since being elected; and

"Whereas total health care spending for 1998-99 will be \$18.5 billion, the highest in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has achieved this despite cuts in transfer payments by the federal Liberal government of more than \$2.4 billion; and

"Whereas a recent survey by the Fraser Institute proves that health care waiting lists in Ontario are the shortest anywhere in Canada; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is placing a greater emphasis on community-based health services in order to better care for an aging population; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is eliminating waste and duplication in the health care sector and reinvesting every penny into quality services; and

"Whereas this has resulted in reinvestments of over \$3 billion; and

"Whereas Niagara region seniors will benefit from the government's \$54-million investment to create 646 new long-term-care beds in the Niagara region alone; and

"Whereas \$75 million is being invested over the next two years to open hospital beds during peak demand periods in order to handle emergency patients; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has pledged \$24.3 million to dramatically expand breast cancer screening; and

"Whereas 140,000 additional low-income earners are eligible to receive help with their drug costs through the expansion of the Trillium drug plan; and

"Whereas over 520 prescription drugs have been added to the Ontario drug plan formulary, giving seniors and others who rely on the ODB program a wider range of products to serve their health care needs;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed with fulfilling the commitments made in the Common Sense Revolution and continuing to pursue policies which will make Ontario the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family."

I'll affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in regard to school closings. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Mike Harris is cutting the heart out of many communities by closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario;" — including one of the most community-oriented schools, Regal Road Junior Public School — "and

"Whereas this massive number of school closings all at once will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas the government promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely; and

"Whereas Mike Harris is pitting parent against parent and community against community in the fight to save local schools; and

"Whereas parents and students in the city of Toronto and many other communities across Ontario are calling on the government to stop closing so many of their schools;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand that Mike Harris's government stop closing local schools, especially those that are closely associated with their communities."

Since I agree, I am putting my signature to this petition.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 25 people.

"Whereas most Ontario residents require adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in

existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

ROAD SAFETY

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas red light cameras can dramatically assist in reducing the number of injuries and deaths resulting from red light runners; and

"Whereas red light cameras only take pictures of licence plates, thus reducing privacy concerns; and

"Whereas all revenues from violations can be easily directed to a designated fund to improve safety at high-collision intersections; and

"Whereas there is a growing disregard for traffic laws resulting in serious injury to pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and especially children and seniors; and

"Whereas the provincial government has endorsed the use of a similar camera system to collect tolls on the new Highway 407 tollway; and

"Whereas mayors and concerned citizens across Ontario have been seeking permission to deploy these cameras due to limited police resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature as follows:

"That the province of Ontario support the installation of red light cameras at high-collision intersections to monitor and prosecute motorists who run red lights."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and I affix my signature hereto.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I have a petition to present from one of my constituents, Jim Connell, and his wife.

"To the members of the Ontario provincial Legislature:

"We, the undersigned members of the Royal Canadian Legion, draw attention to the following:

"Whereas our primary mandate as members of the Royal Canadian Legion is to ensure that proper attention shall be paid to the welfare of all those who have served, and to see to the maintenance and comfort of those who require special treatment, particularly the disabled, sick, aged and needy; and

"Whereas those who served and need our aid may be assured of adequate assistance; and

"Whereas our mandate is to secure adequate pensions, allowance, grants and war gratuities for ex-service personnel and to labour for honour provisions to be made for those in declining years who are unable to support themselves;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the distribution of future long-term-care beds be immediately made available to those various geographical areas throughout the province of Ontario, ie, Kingston, Belleville and Bowmanville, to ensure that the veteran is located in an area close to his or

her family and the community in which they reside, in turn meeting the veteran's current needs; and

"Further, be it resolved that support be given to the resolution passed at the Dominion Convention requesting an amendment to the income requirement of the veterans' allowance program; and

"Be it further resolved that steps be immediately taken by the government of Canada to ensure our veterans are brought to a standard of at least at or above the poverty level of income.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario members of the federal and provincial Parliament to resolve these matters immediately."

I'm pleased to endorse this petition.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREATER TORONTO SERVICES

BOARD ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA COMMISSION DES SERVICES DU GRAND TORONTO

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 56, An Act to establish the Greater Toronto Services Board and the Greater Toronto Transit Authority and to amend the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority Act / Projet de loi 56, Loi visant à créer la Commission des services du grand Toronto et la Régie des Transports en commun du grand Toronto et à modifier la Loi sur la Régie des transports en commun de la région de Toronto.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I'm pleased to lead off this afternoon with some comments which are supplementary to the debate that began last evening on the subject of Bill 56, the one before us now, which we might refer to by its short title, the Greater Toronto Services Board Act.

What this bill does is knit together finally, after years and years of study and debate and contemplation and inaction, the elements in the greater Toronto area into a coordinated whole so that planning and organization across the greater Toronto area can be carried out in a coordinated fashion and not in a haphazard way and not in a directionless way, which is what has characterized the circumstances for the past many years.

This is an issue which has been studied in great depth. The most significant study on the subject, I would imagine, was the one released by the Golden commission, which reported in the very early spring of 1996. It included this comment: "We have reached the point where the status quo is no longer an option. The GTA needs comprehensive change on a number of fronts. Without it, the region's economic competitiveness and prosperity will decline."

The Golden commission was struck in the first place in recognition that there was a need to address the lack of

cohesiveness across the greater Toronto area, recognition that the greater Toronto area was in a sense a body, a population, centred on but by no means confined to the city of Toronto, and growth in that area was a matter that very much concerned all parts of that area, an area that consists of about four million people, half of whom are within the boundaries of Toronto, half of whom are in the areas in the vicinity of Toronto.

That immediately raised the question of what the future of Metro Toronto should be. This government took that question very much in hand and dealt courageously with that challenge and recognized what people subliminally have been aware of for many years, which is that the area within Metro Toronto had matured to the point where it was time to do away with the two tiers that managed matters within Metro Toronto to the point where some 70% of municipal spending was carried out at the Metro level and less than 30% of municipal spending was carried out at the local level and most of the long-range planning was dealt with at the Metro level, and rolled that together into one cohesive municipality so that within the boundaries of Metro Toronto we have greater cohesiveness and greater coordination of vision within the city boundaries, recognizing that it had become, for all intents and purposes, one urban region within the greater Toronto area.

That step was taken in the form of Bill 103. There was some apprehension on the part of some as to whether that was the right way to go, but the experience of the last 11 months has proven, I would suggest, the wisdom of taking that step as the megacity has jelled together most effectively and the issues of modern urban life in Toronto are being dealt with head on by the new Toronto council under the leadership of Mayor Lastman.

We have the most dynamic, the most exciting, the most cohesive city on the North American continent and we are already beginning to see the benefits of bringing together the six constituent lower-tier municipalities with the upper-tier Metro municipality in creating the single city of Toronto. But that in itself was not enough to address the challenges that were faced by the entire greater Toronto area. More must be done to knit together those other areas outside Toronto that form a vital part of the greater Toronto area and whose development and growth must be coordinated with that of the city of Toronto in a way that benefits the population of that entire area and indeed benefits the population of the entire province. That's what Bill 56, the Greater Toronto Services Board Act, the bill that is before this House this afternoon, does.

Now maybe a few comments on just where this bill has come from and what it does would be in order. This bill was introduced in June this year, and it would, if it's passed, create the Greater Toronto Services Board. The need for coordination of services across the GTA, as I've mentioned, has been recognized for decades, because under the current municipal structure coordination across the greater Toronto area has been very difficult and, in some respects, in some cases, it has proven to be absolutely impossible. Municipal boundaries should not be allowed to stand in the way of providing taxpayers and

residents and citizens with seamless and efficient service, the kinds of services and the kind of planning and vision that are required if we are going to see this area reach its potential now and in the future.

What the GTSB will do is provide a productive forum for municipalities across the greater Toronto area to improve the coordination of their development and planning of infrastructure, transport, transit and growth management right across the greater Toronto area. It would certainly ensure that the GTA remains a thriving, growing and prospering region. The legislation would assist municipal governments in the GTA to work better for the people they serve directly.

In preparing this bill, the government has consulted broadly and widely to ensure that every municipality in the greater Toronto area, including upper-tier and lower-tier municipalities, will have at least one member on the Greater Toronto Services Board, and the concerns of the various stakeholders involved will be brought to bear as that board goes about its work. The job of the GTSB will be to promote coordination in the delivery of services, but the GTSB will not actually have the responsibility for the direct delivery of services except for the operation of GO Transit, which will serve the population throughout the GTSB and will be administered directly by the GTSB itself with the addition of the city of Hamilton.

The board no doubt will evolve over time. This is by no means a static model, just as the initial model of Metro Toronto was not static but set the stage for further evolution. As the growth and needs of the area evolved over time, so did the form of governance that was in place to deal with that municipality. Similarly, the GTSB will start off as an advisory body with direct responsibility for GO Transit, but as an advisory body, as a coordinating body, as a forum for debate by the representatives of the various constituent municipalities, but other than GO Transit, it will not have an active role to play in delivering services. But that doesn't mean that it has to stay that way. It is free to evolve over time as the area evolves and as the needs and aspirations of the area evolve.

As I've mentioned, the bill was introduced in June 1995, but the introduction of the bill followed many months of consultation and discussion. In March 1998 the province released draft legislation for the purposes of generating discussion on the creation of a Greater Toronto Services Board and the minister asked former Metro Chairman Alan Tonks to spearhead the consultation process.

1530

I have to say that Chairman Tonks has been nothing less than outstanding in his dedication to the task of meeting with people in Toronto, outside Toronto, at all levels, including at the provincial level, discussing the vision of a Greater Toronto Services Board, discussing the potential of a greater Toronto Services Board, and hearing back from upper-tier and lower-tier municipalities, provincial representatives, other service providers, other stakeholders, on just what such a board should entail, how it should be structured, how it should operate its functions

and how the bill should be designed to address those concerns and those needs and those aspirations. I think we all owe a deep debt of gratitude to Alan Tonks for the work he has done in putting that vision on paper in the form of this bill and bringing to bear all the thoughts, aspirations, concerns and needs of the various stakeholders across the greater Toronto area in the development of the legislation that's before us this afternoon.

If this legislation is passed, it will create a Greater Toronto Services Board. I think it would be worthwhile just reviewing a number of the salient features and characteristics this board would have. To begin with, I should mention that the board would have 41 members on it, so that every municipality is represented, and then there would be one member for Hamilton-Wentworth who would sit only for purposes of administering the Greater Toronto Transit Authority, running GO Transit. Otherwise, Hamilton-Wentworth would be outside the realm of the operations of the GTSB.

There will be 41 members on the board, but there will be a system of weighted voting, and we owe Chairman Tonks credit for devising this method of addressing the need to recognize the interests of the various constituent elements of the greater Toronto area in a fair manner on the board. There would be 41 members on the board, but there would be a system of weighted voting that provides Toronto with 50% of the vote and gives the other areas surrounding Toronto a countervailing 50% voting power.

But as with other elements of the Greater Toronto Services Board, this is not a formula that is written in stone, it is not permanent, it doesn't have to remain that way. This is something that has flexibility to it, and that is a formula that could evolve over time. Right in the bill, a review of the composition is required after each national census.

The Greater Toronto Transit Authority is created to operate GO Transit. The Greater Toronto Services Board itself will exercise general direction and control and GT Transit, operating within the Greater Toronto Services Board, will have day-to-day responsibilities for the operation of GO Transit.

Again, the provincial level has removed itself from the operation of GO Transit, because the operation of GO Transit is something that affects the interests of the residents of the greater Toronto area directly and so the residents of the greater Toronto area will have more direct influence over the operation of GO Transit by administering it through the Greater Toronto Services Board, through GT Transit, and not having it operated out of Queen's Park by a provincial government. So more direct control for the people who are served by GO Transit, through the mechanism of GT Transit, operated under the aegis of the GTSB.

The GTSB may create strategies, such as infrastructure coordination, water, sewer and transportation services and so on, that affect the constituent municipalities and the residents across the greater Toronto area, because it's not enough that each municipality within the area tried to develop its own strategies for these services. These are

services that affect and have an influence upon and are also influenced by the strategies of their neighbouring municipalities. The GTSB provides a forum for the coordination of these services right across the greater Toronto area.

The decisions brought forward by the GTSB in this respect must be approved by two thirds of the GTSB, so nobody has control over the voting power of the GTSB in this respect. It will require a two-thirds vote to approve decisions of the board in these areas, and the decisions are voluntary for GTA municipalities.

What a change from the past, where we have seen the debate take place on the front pages of our daily newspapers as the mayor of one municipality will put forward the interests of that municipality and the mayor or councillor of another municipality puts forth the interests of that municipality, and the debate takes place over the course of several days and several weeks on the front pages of our newspapers and on the editorial pages of our newspapers.

It's much more productive to have a forum in which the various interests are brought to bear and they have an opportunity to meet together to discuss in a productive and constructive manner how these concerns and needs can be addressed and moved forward in a coordinated and mutually beneficial manner. That's one of the visions of the Greater Toronto Services Board and that's one of the potentials it offers us that has been utterly lacking in the failure of having such a board in years past.

A review of the GTSB's size, composition, voting structure, powers and boundaries is required after January 1, 2001, so by no means is this a static model that is being placed before us to stay there for all time. This is something that is to be reviewed and examined and assessed on an ongoing basis, and if changes are indicated, then those changes can be brought about in very prompt order. As early as January 1, 2001, a review is required and no doubt will be acted on at that time.

The costs of operating the GTSB and GO Transit will be levied against the member regional municipalities and the city of Toronto. In the case of Hamilton-Wentworth, it will be for the purposes of GO Transit only. The costs will be assessed against the municipalities. This is not a new level of government with taxing authorities. The GTSB will not have the power to tax, will not have the power to reach directly into the pockets of the residents in the area, but the operations of the GTSB will be supported by the constituent municipalities.

I have every expectation that the efficiencies and benefits that are brought about by the coordinating efforts of the GTSB will more than pay for themselves in increased efficiencies and reduced costs for the constituent municipalities, so that the modest cost of supporting the structure of the GTSB will be more than compensated by the savings that all member municipalities will experience from having their planning and development practices coordinated across the GTSB and having that productive forum to discuss long-range planning rather than, as we've seen all too often in the past, this unproductive public

debate on the front pages of our newspapers, which very seldom leads to a satisfactory resolution of the issues that inevitably will arise from time to time between municipalities which are, after all, neighbours of one another. Much as they serve the needs of one another and benefit from one another, being neighbours, there will always be times when their interests will diverge and there will be a need to reconcile the interests of one versus the interests of another. The Greater Toronto Services Board provides that much-needed forum to reconcile those diverging interests and diverging needs.

Coordination with respect to administration costs of social assistance and social housing will be made available through the mechanism of the GTSB, again another very important coordinating function.

1540

Who likes the idea of the GTSB? Well, practically everybody. The endorsements continue to flow in from municipalities throughout the GTSB and other commentators as well. For example, Toronto deputy mayor Case Ootes was recently quoted as saying, "We want the GTSB because that's the only way you can address the inter-region transportation issues, the waste disposal issues and others that have interregion ramifications."

How about the mayor of Mississauga? Hazel Tonks — Hazel McCallion says that the GTSB will promote and facilitate coordinated municipal decision-making on issues and services spilling over —

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The member's time has expired. Questions and comments?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): As I listened to my colleague in the Conservative Party, although he has added a new mayor to our list, Hazel Tonks, and talked about getting support from all over, even beyond the mayors around here, I was very enthused about the fact that he kept saying that everybody supports this. It reminds me that after the chaos that was created by the rushing of this amalgamation, there is a great sigh of relief when someone says, "We have to have some sort of coordination of this," so they were pleased to have this.

As the member talks about the fact that everyone supports that, just remember the kind of chaos your government brought about in this great amalgamation. I'm sure even the minister himself came to realize that. I see him here today. He has breathed a great sigh of relief at the fact that, with the mess he has created in the rushing of this amalgamation, he hopes this group that will coordinate some of the services will bring a bit of peace, some quietude and some structure to it. But I'm not quite sure this will happen. I think it will only happen when they come to realize the sort of situation they have made in this rushed amalgamation. Of course, Chairman Tonks, who is quite a capable individual, as you know, a very capable individual, will assist in this process. As you go along singing your praises, just realize that, with the mess you have made in the past, this board has a lot of work ahead of it and hopefully will bring some peace to it all.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I was interested to listen to the government member's last

comment, when he said that all these people like it and therefore it must be good. I'm pretty sure at least one of those people didn't like what you were doing in the area of the Toronto merger, so your formula there didn't seem to apply.

I have two quick things in the minute or so that I have to respond; one is that we will be, as we started to last evening, arguing that the board doesn't go far enough, that clearly the initial idea was — in fact, it was recommended initially that this board be done first, rather than the amalgamation of Toronto. But certainly it doesn't go nearly far enough to deal with the issues of a lot of economic development that takes place within the area outlined by the bill. Urban sprawl is not addressed in any way, shape or form. I suspect that the reason for that is that, given the late date in terms of an election being soon, the government did not want to rock any boats, so what they've done is the very, very least amount possible, not unlike their ODA — certainly not to the same degree in terms of the damage, because the ODA, Ontarians with Disabilities Act, is an absolute insult in terms of what it doesn't do.

This is more a question of they should have done more. It is an area where you could have really made your mark and instead you've backed away and done the minimum possible just to prevent being criticized in the upcoming election. That's really all that's happening here: It's meant to be able to put a little check-off beside the box of promises that said something about doing something with regard to a GST, and it really does not achieve the objectives.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): First of all, I would like to thank my colleague the member for York East for those very enlightening comments. He fully recognizes the benefits this act will have in providing coordination right across the greater Toronto area.

It's interesting that last night the member for Scarborough-Agincourt supported the bill and today his colleague the member for Scarborough North does not support it, which I guess is not unusual for the Liberals to do; on one hand they will, on one hand they won't. That was yesterday; this is today.

With respect to my colleague from the NDP, I'd like to point out that the first reading of this legislation was tabled for consultation last March, a full nine months ago, and has continued to have ongoing debate and consultation with all the stakeholders across the greater Toronto area for that period of time.

So this is not a bill that is being brought in and tabled to try to get something done before the end of the session and before the election, whenever that may be — next spring, next fall or a year and a half from now. This is a bill that's being put in place to provide much-needed coordination of the greater Toronto area. I think all parties recognize that coordination is needed. All the municipalities within the greater Toronto area recognize that coordination is needed.

This bill gives them the authority to operate GO Transit, but it also gives them the authority, if they choose,

to develop strategies for waste management, for economic development, for any number of issues that the board feels are important. But it would be the members of that board, the representatives on that board from the municipalities, who would make that decision.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further questions and comments? The member for York East, you can sum up.

Mr Parker: I am pleased to thank the member for Scarborough North, the member for Hamilton Centre and Minister Leach for their comments on my remarks.

I appreciate that the member for Hamilton Centre didn't want to speak so much about the Greater Toronto Services Board as he did want to speak on the subject of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We recognize how the members of the NDP regret their failure to do anything whatsoever to bring forward an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the five years of their government, and it bothers them that this government has taken action and brought forward an ODA during our term.

The member for Scarborough North was quite disparaging in his remarks with regard to this bill. I don't know whether, at the end of the day, he is actually against the bill or if he is just doing the usual Liberal thing, which is to walk down the centre of the line, a little bit to one side, a little bit to the other side, and avoid taking a position on the matter.

I mentioned the names of a few people who have endorsed the GTSB. I didn't get around to all of the people who liked the idea of the GTSB, and I'll give you one more. Who else likes the idea of a GTSB? Lyn McLeod likes the idea of a GTSB. Listen to this.

"The best hope for balanced growth across the GTA lies in shared planning, coordination and co-operation, so that each part of the super-city" — nice catchy term, super-city — "can attract the development best suited to it." Who said that? Lyn McLeod. When did she say it? In 1995, before there was a Bill 103.

She goes on: "Our prosperity and our quality of life will depend on the well-being of the entire region. The outlying areas cannot thrive if the core deteriorates." Who said that? Lyn McLeod. When did she say it? In 1995. That is exactly what the GTSB bill is about.

The Acting Speaker: Before we move on to further debate, I would like to welcome Margaret Harrington, the former member for Niagara Falls, who is sitting in the public gallery west. Welcome, Ms Harrington.

Further debate?

1550

Mr Curling: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Bill 56, an extremely important bill before us today. My constituents in Scarborough North, or Scarborough-Rouge River, as we'll become for the next election, have a great interest in this, because they have seen their city being rushed upon, ripped apart, without full consultation about where they're going to go, what this government called the great amalgamation, the great megacity. They're looking forward to and would like to understand the Greater Toronto Services Board and what it will do.

As I said, though the member and the minister seemed somehow to have missed the point, yes, it is necessary to coordinate services in the greater Toronto area and surrounding municipalities, but the chaos and confusion they have created along the way is going to make quite a challenge for the board. I don't see any power and authority for this board in what it will really do, but I can see the potential where the coordination is extremely necessary.

You must understand, before they had even put together the amalgamation, with the tremendous amount of down-loading the province had done on the municipalities, abdicating their responsibility in many ways — and not only that; while they abdicated their responsibility, they even pulled back some of the funding that could do the job. I don't think the municipalities of the greater Toronto area would mind doing some of the jobs that the provincial government has tried to abdicate from, but not having enough funds has made it worse.

I heard the member saying that things like housing will now be coordinated under this great group. In the meantime, before it was even created, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing no longer answered to any questions in regard to housing and, worse yet, with regard to affordable housing, a drastic problem we have today in the greater Toronto area and many of the cities across Ontario.

What have we seen as the result of that? It's the worst we have ever seen — in fact, it's a disaster — with regard to what is happening with homelessness, with people on the streets of Toronto, Kingston, Windsor and many of the great cities of Ontario, all due to the way this government has behaved.

With the nightmare this government has created, they said what we should do is have another bureaucracy to coordinate all of this. I agree that we should have some coordination, but as I emphasize again, they created this great nightmare that we have on our hands today.

I haven't even touched on what they have done to property tax, and I could go on all day. My colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt eloquently and profoundly described the confusion that has been created in property tax. This government expounded on how they were going to resolve this once and for all, the shambles of the property tax, that they are going to make it fair. In the short time since they have taken responsibility for the province, they have introduced seven different pieces of legislation to deal with this problem. Remember, they introduced Bill 106, saying, "This is going to resolve the property tax and bring fairness." Then they had Bill 149, and that didn't work, so they introduced yet another bill, Bill 160.

They were talking about how much everyone was in agreement with what they had done with the restructuring committee. I clearly remember what the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario actually said to them when 106 came about, after they did 160, 164, then 16, then 61, and now 79. The association said, "We are now at the end of 1998, and a state of administrative chaos, we fear, has in fact come to pass," and Bill 79 will compound those problems.

As they stand today and talk about the wonderful things they're going to do with the restructuring committee in coordinating all that, they have created such chaos along the way, a wrecking crew along the road, with the fact that they can't even get it right — seven different pieces of legislation to deal with property tax, and they call it fairness. As you brag today about this piece of legislation, just remember the chaos you have created.

Let me take a moment to speak of a gentleman who I think has done a tremendously wonderful job. Of course I'm not speaking about the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing — not at all. It would take another day to talk about the chaos he has brought to housing and homelessness and many of the things we have today. As a matter of fact, he has destroyed housing in this province to the extent that there is no more affordability for those who need it, he and his cohort from community and social services, who declared war on the poor and took away their supports and said, "Go fend for yourselves," and created the homelessness situation we have today.

No, I'm speaking about Alan Tonks, Chairman Tonks, who has done a wonderful job. If only you could take a page from his book in terms of how he has done consultation, gone around to explain and tried his best to make sure one understands what this government is doing. Yes, he tried. I still do not fully understand the direction this government is going, but maybe if one decided to take taxes away from everyone to help those who most need government — because that is what government is about, helping those who are more vulnerable in our society. That's what we want government to do, certainly not to take the taxes and give them to the rich and beat up on the poor. Chairman Tonks came around and tried to explain how this coordination would take place. I want to take my hat off to him and the way he went about doing his work.

Let me focus for a moment on some of the recommendations this government has received over the years but not paid any heed to at all. David Crombie is quite a respected individual, one of the few Conservative individuals whom I respect. I respect David Crombie very much. When he was appointed to the Who Does What committee, I said to myself, "Here's an individual we can all listen to." When he brought out his report, we very much expected that this government would listen. We thought they would have taken his advice and gone forward on it, but no, they decided to take barely any of those recommendations and went through the exercise of saying they had consulted, but they did not. I hope you go back to what David Crombie said when he submitted his report and follow his direction.

I want to get back to housing, because I think in the years to come we're going to find a situation in this province that we cannot resolve. I'm speaking about affordability. Through the trickle-down theory of the Conservative government, they think, "Let's feed the rich and whatever they have later on will trickle down to the poor." The poor are now waiting on the streets. They're on the grates outside warming themselves because they don't

have anywhere to go. There are those they've chased out of the hospitals who are not getting proper care.

It was a Conservative government that started the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric patients, sending them out without any sort of coordination whatsoever, without any kind of housing. When the Liberal government came to power, we put some strategies in place to have some homes, affordable housing. When the NDP came in, of course they also did some supportive work and followed through on some of the wonderful work that the Minister of Housing in the Liberal government had done.

We thought that was a foundation that was solid, to move forward from, that the only way to go from there was to improve. But lo and behold, this government came in and destroyed that foundation, and what we are seeing today is the evidence all over, people at food banks, people on the grates warming themselves, walking mindlessly on the streets with nowhere to go. Furthermore, there are no plans whatsoever to build affordable housing. What is this government saying? "We have this wonderful Greater Toronto Services Board that will be handling housing" — no money, no policy, not at all.

1600

I have to commend the mayor of Toronto, who said, "I should take a closer look at it." I know a year ago he hadn't seen any homeless persons, but when he came to wrestle with the fact that there were a lot of homeless people he was appalled. As a matter of fact, he actually declared a national disaster. The federal government also observed that they are concerned about it. The only level of government that does not see this in any way is this Conservative Mike Harris government, which says there is no problem whatsoever for affordability or for homelessness in our province.

How is he going to resolve this? The minister and his colleagues are saying, "We'll just hand it over to the Greater Toronto Services Board and they will resolve it" — no money, no strategies, nothing at all. They just hope it will go away. Homelessness is of course much worse during the cold, when people die; of course when it gets warmer that may not happen. For the 14 years I have been in politics here and observing this very closely, I have never seen a situation like this, caused very much by this Conservative government, this government that praises themselves for the fact that they are doing a better job than anyone else.

We all remember, Madam Speaker, and you remember too, that when this amalgamation, this megacity, was coming about, we said: "Let's slow it down a bit. Let's look at it very carefully to see what we are doing, what economic impact we're having on the different cities we are putting together, what social impact. While it may be a good idea, let's see if it will cause disaster." What was the response? "No, I am right; I know exactly what I am doing," and they went ahead and rammed it through without any consultation whatsoever. They said, "We've talked enough."

It's this same government that said: "All these people are special interest groups. We don't want to listen to

them." All of a sudden, I hear the members over there saying: "We consult so much. We had this Greater Toronto Services Board debate nine months ago and we have had input on all aspects of it." It's funny how you have started listening now, after you have opened the gates and the horses are out. Now you are saying, "We can talk." Now, after the chaos and the confusion you have created, you can talk.

Yes, I support this, strongly so. I support the fact that we have some coordination, but I wish very much that you would start doing some consulting and some other strategies before you reach this situation and then praise and start listing those who are supportive. Yes, Lyn McLeod of course said, "We support this kind of strategy," and my colleague Gerry Phillips from Scarborough-Agincourt said: "Sure, I say the same thing. I support a coordinated strategy of how we do our transportation and the GO Transit." Of course we do. But my golly, what a challenge we have on our hands.

Giving this board no authority — and I don't know what the responsibility really is. You're saying, "Here is what you're going to do," but not giving them any power. I hope, with the pressure of it all, that you will give it some more funding and some more power to do the work it should do.

Yes, bringing in the external areas like Hamilton and around I think is a good move. The greater Toronto area is not an island unto itself. This government seemed somehow to feel that anyone in the 416 area was no longer a part of Ontario, that they could all go away, rot and die. People were getting concerned: Were you writing off the great city where four million people are, almost half the population of the province, with no care whatsoever, just to get more power, more seats beyond Toronto?

But they know. I think the 905 area woke up. It was almost like they were saying, when you would come to get people in the night: "They're only coming to get my neighbour. They won't be bothering with me." Then the 905 woke up and said, "This power-hungry group may come for us in the morning." They have now agreed that the way you are treating the 416 area is bringing chaos to the engine of the economy. This is where most of the economy is generated; quite a large portion of the economy is being generated here. It cannot be ignored and insulted in the way you gone about governing.

I hope the mandate of the Greater Toronto Services Board — as you said, it is not a closed shop; it is not locked down, where no one can be expressive and expansive later on. I hope they can look later on and say that whatever you do to the greater Toronto area, you had better make sure that it is included as an overall part of Ontario. Somehow, and I hope it doesn't come to that, we have two areas of Ontario: those in the 416 and the others.

Government must be for all the people, regardless of where they live. It doesn't seem so with this government. It doesn't seem as if this government wants to care for the most vulnerable in our society. As a matter of fact, you don't care, because they are the ones who are suffering most in all this restructuring you're going about doing in

your ignorance: the insults you have put to the poor, as if it is their fault that things are worse off today, their fault that they cannot afford housing, their fault they are poor. This government collects its taxes and moves to give it to the rich, and somehow the poor are left out.

I'm saying it takes too much effort for this government to get things right. I can recommend to you that it's very easy in a democratic society. If you do consultation, if you listen, if you bring those kinds of comments back to the table and reflect what the citizens of this province want, you will get it right. But if you go ahead in the dictatorial, bullying way you have done things, with the closure of debates where one cannot debate things in this House, the fact is that you will have chaos. You'll be writing legislation seven times when you can't the taxation right. If you had just listened in the first instance and gone about it the way people told you, it's quite possible that you'd have gotten it right in the first place. Of course, with amendments through the process of debates in the Legislature and committee hearings, you will get better written legislation, but not going back to the table all these times, trying to get it right and seeing what you can do.

It's just like the school closings. People have told you that a school is not just a building where they teach students, but a part of the community. When thousands upon thousands of people came out and said, "Don't gut our community like that," what did you do, after you had extracted \$1 billion from education funding? You quickly rushed \$200 million back in and gave them a reprieve. You said, "OK, back off, because we're going to have an election soon, and if we can cool you off for a little bit" — but people are wise to all this, and \$200 million won't buy the people of our province.

Let me just say in closing that the people are wise to it. When you form the Greater Toronto Services Board, it gives a little hope to people that coordination will come to the kind of mess you have made, that when it comes to some of the things you have not addressed over the years, or the things you have addressed in an erratic, dictatorial, bullying, undemocratic way, somehow there will be some sort of hearing and someone will be able to deal with the things that very much need to be dealt with. We hope that the transportation situation can be resolved and discussed in an intelligent way. We hope that housing and the school system will be dealt with in a proper way, so I will of course support this legislation.

1610

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): The member for Scarborough North has raised a lot of points of course, many of which we agree with. It's all tangentially related in terms of concerns that he's raised. That's always important. But I'll be interested — of course, you might refer to some of the comments that the member from East York touched upon when he introduced this debate. "We have a whole pile of studies," he said, "and the status quo is simply not on. Inadequate. It's not an option. We need to do something because we need greater cohesiveness

within the new Toronto council and the rest of the GTA councils surrounding it."

So when we look at this bill, one wonders, OK, they've reviewed all these studies, the Golden report and David Crombie's Who Does What report, and I say to myself, if they've read all these studies, why haven't they included some of the stuff that they supported themselves? What we have in front of us is very, very weak, and I know why it's weak: because there are a whole heap of politicians in the Durham area who are opposing this modest proposal that is before us. So I can appreciate the fact that what we have before us is something that of course people in the 905 region oppose, have a whole lot of questions about, but what troubles me is that this government makes it appear that they're moving on something, that it's earth-shattering, that the status quo is not on and we have something visionary coming from this crowd. Of course, it's nothing of the sort. It's a little step, not a big one. Please don't present it as if somehow you've solved all the questions around this. We have a whole lot of questions we want to ask as well.

Hon Mr Leach: I'd like to comment on the comments made by the member for Scarborough North, which I found shocking and appalling, to be quite frank. Why the member for Scarborough North would insult the mayor of Toronto by insinuating that a year ago, before Mr Lastman became mayor, there was no homelessness and now that he's been mayor it's a national disaster, I just find that appalling. I'm sure he didn't mean that and he might want to retract that if he gets an opportunity.

He did say something, though, and that's that Alan Tonks is doing a good job in consulting with the stakeholders involved in getting this bill together, and he has done a wonderful job. He has had well over a hundred meetings. He had 57 different sessions with stakeholders from every municipality in the greater Toronto area. The input that has gone into the creation of this bill has been as extensive as any piece of legislation that has gone through this House in perhaps the last 12 or 14 years.

The input from all of the areas of the region, whether it be the rural or the suburban or the urban, has been extensive. Everyone has had an opportunity to state their case and have their views made known. It's all reflected in the bill. All of the opinions of all of those various stakeholders are reflected in this bill. I only can conclude by knowing that that's why the members of the opposition are reluctantly supporting this bill.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I want to commend the member for Scarborough North for his comments. No wonder he has lasted so many years, being re-elected time after time, because when he gets up to give an opinion on whatever issue, he's really knowledgeable. With all due respect to the minister, who is in the House, I think the member for Scarborough North has given an excellent presentation on the views with respect to the creation of the Greater Toronto Services Board.

He has of course only touched on a few of the issues or perhaps consequences of the creation of this Greater Toronto Services Board, and yes, when he says that

housing is one of those major issues, this is one of those issues that affects a lot of people, including the tenants, including the single wage-earner, including the pensioners who are living in a very touchy situation now where there is no more rent control, for example. I would say that this is going to be happening in the —

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: With all due respect, there is no quorum in the House. Would you check, please.

The Acting Speaker: Could you check and see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Yorkview may continue.

Mr Sergio: Just to finish my 20 seconds or so, again I congratulate the member for Scarborough North for his presentation with respect to the creation of the Greater Toronto Services Board, and all the consequences that we may have to face if the government doesn't really present something that is accountable, that has depth and that can be accepted by all the parties concerned, not only here in Metro, but also in the GTA.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? The member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr Christopherson: I mentioned earlier in my responses to the member for York East my concern about the lack of breadth of the bill in terms of what it does. I want to say, and since I'm speaking next I will comment to a greater degree on that, it has a major impact on us in Hamilton-Wentworth because we are a part of the transit authority that is being created here but we are not a member of the Greater Toronto Services Board, for obvious reasons, and I'm not going to suggest that we should be.

The type of planning that takes place within the area that is comprised within this board has a major impact on our economy in Hamilton-Wentworth, on our social life as a result of whether we can have the kind of economy that we need in Hamilton-Wentworth to support the challenges that we, like all other communities, have. Urban sprawl, whether it's controlled or not, has a major impact on investment decisions that are made in Hamilton-Wentworth. All of these things have us continuing to sit by and watch whatever happens in either Toronto proper or now in the greater Toronto area through the Greater Toronto Services Board being out of our hands.

We have to more or less anticipate decisions that this authority will make as it impacts on Hamilton-Wentworth and react to them. Quite frankly, we would like to see a lot more planning and coordination happen. My colleague from York East talked about the fact that this bill allows coordination. We'd like to see a lot more coordination in this area from the Hamilton-Wentworth perspective. We'd like you to get a grip on urban sprawl and we'd like you to get a grip on the economic development of this part of the province because it does have a major impact on us, and

when you get your act together, we can better get ours together.

1620

Mr Curling: I want to thank the member for Fort York, my good colleagues from Yorkview and Hamilton Centre, and of course the minister, who is here. I must commend him. Few ministers come here when they want to defend their own legislation, and he's here doing that.

I want to emphasize that I would still make the point of how important it is that we get some more decisive direction as to what this board is all about. I still find its responsibilities rather vague. To say, "To promote and facilitate coordinated decision-making among the municipalities in the greater Toronto area," has no legal powers of enforcement. It's nice to have laws, but if you don't have an enforcement aspect, where does that go? That is an aspect of it that I hope they will try to improve.

I think too that they have to do much more about the authority over how the social services' pooling of funds will happen. It is extremely important, because if the government does not understand the fact that social services in any city are an integral part of how its citizens behave, then we will have a very difficult time in managing and governing the city itself.

We will grow. The diversity of the greater Toronto area and its ethnicity is something we must focus on to make sure this sort of representation responds to those kinds of needs.

I just want to say that as we go through and approve this legislation, let us be mindful of some of the things you have done in the past that make this job much more difficult. We hope there will be sufficient funding there to do the job well.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I want to correct my own record. I believe in one of my earlier comments, rather than mentioning the GTSB — and I think I shortened it to GTS — actually I think I said GST. That could come from just staring at Tories too much every day, but I do believe I made that error.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I believe it's the other guys who promised to get rid of that tax.

Mr Christopherson: Well, you guys brought it in. The Liberals should have gotten rid of it. You guys are still Tories. You can deny the family all you want, you're still there. It's still Tories.

I want to begin my remarks by doing something very unusual for me, and that is, I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and I'll do that at the outset. I'm going to spend the rest of my time attacking his downloading, his government and a number of other things that I'm going to try and jam into the 20 minutes that I have, because it needs to be done, but I do want to express appreciation of the fact that he has recognized one of the major flaws in Bill 56 from a Hamilton-Wentworth perspective. I would like to put it on the record and also reflect the minister's commitment to correct it.

Members will note that subsection 10(1) states: "After each regular election, the members of the board described

in clauses 4(a) to (c) shall elect as chair of the board a person who is not a member of a council of a municipality..." etc. The key thing is when it says "the members of the board described in clauses 4(a) to (c)." When we look at clauses 4(a) to (c), we find that they speak to:

"4. The board shall be composed of

"(a) the chair of the council of each regional municipality, other than the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, that is a participating municipality and the mayor of each lower-tier municipality..." etc.

What this does — and I'm not suggesting that it was done purposely or with any kind of mean-spirited intent, like other things you've done to us. I'm not suggesting that in this case here. I suspect that indeed it was a drafting error. The result of the way that it's phrased has left Hamilton-Wentworth without a vote on who the chair is. Given that this is now the governing agency for GO Transit, and that's a key element of our transportation system and of our future economic growth, we obviously deserve, just as every other member does, the opportunity to have a say in who the chair is.

Right now, under this bill as we are debating it, we don't have that right in Hamilton-Wentworth. Our regional chair sitting on this board, on this authority — I have to get the board and the authority straight — the Greater Toronto Transit Authority, will not have a vote. For that matter, we don't have one for the board chair either. Obviously that's unfair. There's no legitimate reason or rationale at all for Hamilton-Wentworth not having the same right as every other municipality to vote on the chair, given the influence that the chair of any organization has.

I understand that my regional chair, Terry Cooke, has raised this with the minister. I raised it with him prior to my rising here today, just a few minutes ago I talked to him about it, and the minister has given the assurance to both regional chairman Cooke and myself that an amendment will be forthcoming that will indeed give Hamilton-Wentworth a vote for the chair of the authority and the chair of the board. I believe that's the commitment. I see the minister nodding his head, so I want to say to him that I appreciate very much the fact that you've recognized that this omission is certainly unfair to my hometown and needs to be corrected and the fact that you've committed to ensure that there's a government amendment that will carry that will reflect what's right. Again, Minister, I appreciate your doing that on behalf of my community.

Now, having said all of that, let's understand that there's a major impact in terms of what this government has done vis-à-vis GO Transit in terms of part of the downloading on to my community. Let me go back in history a little bit. It was during our tenure in government, the NDP government, when the funding for our new GO Transit centre on Hunter Street began to flow. That allowed the construction and the conversion of what was the old TH&B station, which had been unused; it was all but derelict. We were losing the building. I don't believe there was a single train going through there, but if there

was, it was almost a re-routing as opposed to anything purposeful.

We funded \$70 million so that we could convert that old TH&B station into the modern station that it now is. I've talked about us saving historical buildings in my community of Hamilton before and how proud we are of our ability to do that, and there's construction going on now with the post office. Again, we started flowing the money when we were in government. It was on the rocks a little bit in terms of this government's chopping block. We got it back on the path of being funded. That is happening and we've saved a beautiful part of our heritage, and that will make a major —

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors): Tell us about the Liberals.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, it did start under the Liberals, no question. They said yes; we funded the money; you guys almost said, "Maybe we need to cut it," and then you kind of straightened back up and now it's going forward. Knowing the Tories as the kind of politicians that they are, hopefully we'll be cutting a ribbon before the election. That's one I'll be proud to be at and will be glad to see. Maybe Cam can heckle whether or not that's going to happen before the election. Is that going to happen before the election, Cam?

Hon Mr Jackson: I'm talking about the old train station that Lily Munro —

Mr Christopherson: No, I'm talking about the post office. The fact of the matter is that it's interesting that Minister Jackson would want to heckle in the midst of all this, because he's on record after they formed power as saying that we were wrong to build it; we, the NDP government, were wrong to build the new GO Transit centre the way we did. This is a guy who the government puts forward as being Hamilton's voice in cabinet. What a joke.

1630

The fact is that this not only saved a historic building, a well-recognized historical building of great architectural value of the art deco period as well as the history of Hamilton, we also were able to move our very old bus terminal from Rebecca Street over here and it now serves three major purposes.

It serves as the new GO Transit centre for our region in a brand-new building, which by the way, I would remind members of the government when they like to talk about the amount of money that we invested in communities like Hamilton-Wentworth, kept hundreds if not thousands of construction workers working and earning a paycheque and able to pay their bills and put food on the table at a time when the measures of the federal Tory government were causing massive losses of jobs out of our community, by and large because of free trade and certainly because of the recession. As we know, the recession was deeper and longer in Canada than in any of the other G7 nations because of their interest rate policies. That is what caused the major part of the recession we faced. Our investment and flowing the money and letting this project go forward

kept hundreds, if not thousands, of workers in the Hamilton area on the job receiving a paycheque.

In addition to that, as I mentioned, it provides us with a beautiful, brand-new transit centre right near the downtown. I would say for the interest of government members, there was quite a controversy in Hamilton where a lot of people thought it should have gone to the old CN station, to the waterfront down in the north end, mainly because of parking availability. But at the end of the day, and I was a member of the council that voted to keep it in the downtown core, the main reason we kept it down there was because of the need to keep as many people coming in and moving around in the downtown core as possible, and the new GO Transit centre is within walking distance of city hall, Jackson Square, the art gallery, Hamilton Place. All of the key attractions of our beautiful downtown Hamilton are within walking distance, so we decided to locate it there.

As I mentioned, it also allowed us to move our old bus terminal into this facility, so it also serves as the centre of our regional bus transit. Now we've got GO Transit and the train service in one location, within walking distance of downtown. We've got our new bus terminal contained in there as part of it, and the HSR, the Hamilton Street Railway, has changed their routes to allow their service to come through there. So we have three major focuses of transit centred in this new facility that I was so very proud to be a part of.

I would compare that, by the way, to the times we're in now, when the government likes to suggest that any money that was spent by the previous NDP was somehow lost or wasted. I would defy and challenge any of the other Hamilton members who are Tories to stand up and say that \$70 million should not have been spent on a new GO Transit centre for Hamilton-Wentworth. I defy any one of them, and there are at least two in the House right now. The fact is that this was money well invested at a time when people needed jobs. It was money that was invested in our important transportation network and it was money invested in our future economic growth. Money that was invested — not wasted — in Hamilton-Wentworth, money well spent, money that the people of Hamilton-Wentworth and the businesses of Hamilton-Wentworth will benefit from for decades.

I want to also expand further on what I talked about in terms of the fact that the new board doesn't go far enough in its coordination powers. The reality is for Hamilton-Wentworth that we do live in the shadow of Toronto. It's very difficult sometimes to be recognized as the major urban centre that we are when we're so close to Toronto. Now as the governing tentacles of Toronto are growing and growing, which is a good thing, by the way, the impact on the planning of what takes place within this very large and very significant part of Ontario has a major impact on us in Hamilton-Wentworth.

It's difficult for us to come to grips with a lot of our planning issues when we're all trying to look three, five, 10, 30 years into the future; when we're making engineering investments in terms of sewage pipelines etc, very

major capital costs within the regional government; very difficult when we're trying to come to grips with our own urban sprawl, because within the region we do have some beautiful farmland and natural acreage that we want to preserve for future generations. It's difficult for us to make firm planning decisions when we don't know where this large, huge entity that has such great influence on our future is going to go. It would have been our preference that indeed this legislation go further.

I realize that people say there's opposition in the 905. Let's be clear. When people say "905," they usually think of Mississauga, Burlington and the sort of suburban areas of Toronto, I say at the risk of upsetting municipal leaders in those communities. Hamilton-Wentworth is in the 905 area code, but our issues and our problems and our relationship with Toronto are very different from those others. When my colleagues and others refer to the 905, a lot of those opinions and attitudes are not necessarily shared by Hamilton-Wentworth. It is indeed, let me be very clear, to our advantage in Hamilton-Wentworth, in representing the citizens that we do, that there be as great a coordination of as many services and as much planning as possible in the Greater Toronto Services Board area, so I am one of those who would say: "Strengthen this, go further. It doesn't go far enough."

In the five minutes that I have left, I want to return to transit in terms of what it means. As people know, the GO Transit responsibilities and operating capital have now been downloaded to the municipalities. When we talk about GO Transit as public transit and recognize that it's good for the economy but that it's also good for the environment, it's not good that this has been downloaded to municipalities. Municipalities have been so handcuffed in terms of the money that they have to spend on other priorities that I am very fearful that public transit and GO Transit in particular are going to fall further and further down the list of priorities.

When we consider that in Hamilton-Wentworth we received as new costs, costs that we didn't have before, \$3.3 million for GO Transit, and then look at all the other pressures that are on us financially, and remember that \$36.3 million of the downloading to our community was not offset by removal of education taxes from the property bill, we were losers to the tune of \$36 million.

I would remind the minister, should he choose to respond in his two-minute response to this part of my comments, that the person who oversaw the compiling of these numbers, the numbers that I'm using here today, the \$36.3 million that you stiffed us for, the individual who oversaw these numbers being compiled you had enough faith in and enough trust in to hire as your new deputy minister. So I would strongly suggest that if his intent was, as he has done in the past, to call into question elected officials and staff officials of my community when I use numbers here in the House, that he remember that the person he just hired as his number two individual, his deputy minister, is the very person who oversaw the compiling of this document that shows that we were stiffed for

\$36 million when you did your downloading exercise. That's the reality.

When I think about GO Transit in the future as now a regional responsibility, with little or no help from the province, I'm very worried for it, because we don't have the money and because of the amount of new services that have been downloaded to Hamilton-Wentworth, the \$36 million we lost on this, the \$17 million that we've been hit with on the business education tax. Other communities didn't get hit with that amount, but we did; we're out \$17 million. That's got to be paid for by business and residential taxpayers — that's the only place for it to come from — or from cuts in service.

1640

Given that we're now responsible for housing, ambulance services, increased costs in child care, public health services, and you downloaded a lot of the highways from the provincial system down to our area, when our councils have to make the decisions, not on where they're going to spend new money but on what they're going to preserve, GO Transit in terms of any kind of expansion is not even on the radar screen. I suspect the same will be true in a lot of other municipalities.

So what's the net result of that? It means less investment in public transit, less opportunity for economic growth outside the immediate greater Toronto area, less protection for our environment, more pollution as people look at a provincial transit system that doesn't meet their needs and stick with their personal automobile. If you're not going to provide a GO Transit that works, goes to where people need it when they need it, they're not going to use it and they're going to stay with their car. So I really worry about what this means overall for my community of Hamilton-Wentworth and for the greater Ontario region in terms of an economic entity.

The last thing I want to raise I accept kind of borders on petty, but it's the sort of thing that really bugs us in Hamilton. We had a perfectly good name: GO Transit. I believe it stands for Government of Ontario Transit. I see the minister nodding his head. It was Government of Ontario Transit, but now we're going to change it to Greater Toronto Transit, GT Transit. The fact is, Hamilton-Wentworth is as important a part of that partnership as any other community, unless the minister wants to stand up and say different. If we respect and accept the fact that Hamilton-Wentworth is a full and respected partner in GO Transit, when you change the name, you deny us a bit of our identity, a bit of the opportunity we're entitled to to be seen as part of the full partnership. In the context of other things you've done, this is not a big issue, but it is the sort of thing that drives us around the bend in Hamilton and therefore needs to be raised by a Hamiltonian in the context of this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Mario Sergio): Questions or comments?

Hon Mr Leach: In response to the comments of the member for Hamilton Centre, I thank him for his kind comments at the beginning of his speech. They deteriorated slightly during his 20 minutes.

His premise is that the bill doesn't go far enough. I'd just like to point out that there were opposing points of view on that, as to whether it should be a very strong board or a board with limited powers to start. After immense consultation, it was determined that perhaps the board should walk before it ran. That is a comment that the Liberal member from Scarborough made last night. Its first responsibility when it's formed is to run and operate GO Transit, but it does have the ability to take on additional responsibilities if a two-thirds majority of the board chooses to do so.

With a two-thirds majority vote, they could take over the responsibility for economic development or waste management or any other strategy or issue that faces the greater Toronto area. They have the ability to do that. The bill allows them to do that if they choose to do that but it does not mandate that they do that, so we can give the Greater Toronto Services Board an opportunity to get up and functioning, get operating, get a handle on all the issues that are facing them, without being mandated initially to do that. But they will be able to do that in time.

With respect to the name GO Transit, I have a great deal of sympathy with the member's position because I was one of the original members of GO Transit. I founded it. I have a great deal of respect for that name. Move an amendment. You might get my support.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? The member from Scarborough.

Mr Parker: No, try York East. I know that the folks from Yorkview can't tell the difference between East York and Scarborough, but bear with us. You'll learn.

I will keep my remarks very short. I simply want to make the observation that after time and time again in this House that this government has been criticized for going too far too fast with a piece of legislation, in the case of this bill we've just heard a long rant essentially criticizing the government for not going far enough fast enough.

In my remarks, I already indicated that this is a bold new step, the development of a Greater Toronto Services Board. It's never been done before. No other government ever had the courage or vision to take this step. This government has taken that step, has engaged in a broad program of consultation in bringing about this legislation and bringing this concept forward. But the concept is not written in stone, another point I tried to stress in my remarks. It is a beginning, but it has the potential to evolve over time to meet the needs and the aspirations of the communities in the greater Toronto area as they present themselves and as those needs must be addressed.

I say to the member from Hamilton, take some comfort from knowing that there is potential to move this bill forward and to take the model forward as the needs arise. But it is refreshing to hear the government criticized for going too cautiously, too slowly, not far enough, in contrast to what we customarily hear from the other side. I do wish they'd make up their minds about what they want us to do.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my pleasure to comment on the member for Hamilton Centre's remarks

on Bill 56. I will be commenting on this piece of legislation next week, but I want to go on the record as respecting the views of the member from Hamilton.

Also, it's important to recognize that the Durham region is impacted by the choices that are before us. I'm comforted by the minister's having said this afternoon that there is a broad range of options but he wants to get this organization up and established. My question of course is, is it another level of government? I'm certainly not for more government; I'm for less government. I have listened to the comments from the regional chair of Durham, Roger Anderson. On some aspects I agree with him; on many I disagree, some of his points most recently.

Alan Tonks visited Durham on a couple of different occasions. I arranged meetings with Mayor Moffatt from the township of Scugog, and I know he met with all the mayors of the Durham region, whether Ajax, Pickering, Whitby, Oshawa, Clarington or Uxbridge. I would say that generally it's a very tough decision for Durham region, for many of the same reasons the member for Hamilton Centre cited. It's a new growth area. It has been almost 25 years since the region was formed and they're just now maturing. In the rural areas, I know the comments were made in the Golden report that the northeastern region, the Uxbridge-Scugog-Clarington area, may not be mature enough to be part of this huge GTA. I have to listen to my constituents and I listened to the debate here, and I do not want another level of government.

Certainly there are areas within the region across the GTA that should be better coordinated. Economic development was mentioned. Waste management is in the news today. Clearly, the minister is listening, and the rural arguments must be heard in this whole debate.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to provide some remarks on the speech made by the member for Hamilton Centre. When he speaks, you always know what his position is on the issue and you never have any difficulty hearing him. I was impressed by the obvious long time and effort he has put into this whole issue, and I was equally impressed by the interplay between him and the minister, who obviously have had a lot of discussion on this. I am sure that the minister, who has already indicated that he will be following up on some of the remarks made by the member, will do so. That's really the substance of my remarks.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre has two minutes to respond.

1650

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the comments of the members who spoke. To the member for Durham East, I can appreciate very much that your concerns would be similar to ours in Hamilton-Wentworth and I suspect that as much as you're concerned about another level of government, there has to be a recognition that if these things aren't coordinated and planned properly by those inside the greater Toronto area, then we're going to be left in our respective regions responding to plans that aren't nearly as detailed and as full as they should be, thereby making it more possible that we will make mistakes when we do

planning in our respective regions. So I think there is a real need to make sure we can see clearly where this major political entity is going in terms of the plans for expansions in the areas mentioned.

I thank the member from Georgian Bay for his recognition, and yet I have to tell you, it hasn't happened very often. Much to my disappointment, not that I would say it's entirely my fault, but it is my disappointment that there isn't more of that kind of interplay. But we have found it very difficult, to be truthful to you, to get a lot of your ministers to listen. Today the minister listened and I appreciated it and I'm prepared to acknowledge whenever that happens.

To the minister's comments that the speech got worse as time went on, it's funny, I felt just the other way about it. I thought the beginning was pretty shaky, but I felt a whole lot stronger about it as time went on and a lot clearer on the issue. I suspect the volume went up too as I went on, as I felt clearer on the issue. I want to tell him that I will do what I can to influence my caucus to introduce an amendment that would have it stay as GO Transit. I think that would be good.

To the member for York East who said it's nice to hear criticism about too far, too fast rather than the other way around, if you do the right thing you won't get criticism at all.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time is up. The member for Scarborough East.

Mr Gilchrist: I'm indeed pleased to add some comments to this debate on second reading of Bill 56. It's quite interesting, we've just heard from the member for Hamilton Centre bemoaning the lack of consultation in some areas, he claims, from time to time. Yet just this morning we concluded the clause-by-clause consideration of a very important piece of legislation, the new apprenticeship act, an act that's designed to ensure that there's far greater access, far greater involvement, far more opportunities for people who want to get involved in trades, who want to get involved in many of the growth areas of our economy but heretofore have not had those chances.

We listened and we listened very hard to the various trade unions, the employers, to apprentices themselves. They told us about defects in the system. They told us about ways we could make it better. Some groups told us that particularly as it affects the construction industry the existing act was doing quite well.

We not only listened to them, we responded to a degree that left the Toronto Sun this morning predisposed to have its headline that the trade unions won their way. I'd like to suggest that what really should have been the headline is that once again the government truly reflected what was in the best interests of the greatest number of Ontarians. In this case, it was important to us to ensure that in a system that was working well in the construction trades we weren't going to change for change's sake.

That brings me to the bill before us here today. I don't think there's been a piece of legislation that has undergone more consultation than the bill before us. We had on the

day we were elected the benefit of a work in process. To their credit, the previous government had commissioned Anne Golden to look at various governance issues in the greater Toronto area. We asked Ms Golden to accelerate the time frame of her report, and in January 1996 she came in with quite a weighty tome and a number of recommendations. From that we moved to set up a process specifically geared to the issues relating to the formation of a possible Greater Toronto Services Board.

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There may not be quorum in the House. Will you please check?

The Acting Speaker: Would you check if a quorum is present.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Scarborough East.

Mr Gilchrist: In a way, I thank the member opposite for ensuring that there are six times as many Conservatives as there are opposition members in to hear the presentation this afternoon.

There's no doubt then, following on the work done by Ms Golden, that the next step in our process was to ask a very experienced, very respected former official from the ministry, with a wealth of municipal experience, Mr Milt Farrow, to undertake a similar review, a more intensive review on the actual process related to the creation of a coordination body that would deal with the issues of those services that crossed certain municipal boundaries.

Mr Farrow did meet with all of the municipal councils in the GTA, with many of the individual councillors. He came up with his report in May 1997. We then followed up with a series of further consultations that took us into early this year, when Alan Tonks, the former chair of Metro Toronto, took a number of different steps to pursue even further consultation.

By this point we had certainly heard the positions of all the councils, all the cities and towns, the villages and regions in the GTA. We had also heard from a great number of individual citizens and groups. This issue had gotten a lot of publicity in the media. There were no secrets about the consideration that government was giving to the creation of something we've now come to call the Greater Toronto Services Board. So presumably all those people who had an interest in this issue had communicated that either to the ministry, to Mr Farrow, or subsequently, when Mr Tonks started his process, to Mr Tonks.

In March of this year, Mr Tonks consulted with 28 municipalities. He met with 29 other individuals and groups or received their written comments. In May Mr Tonks then held six forums on the issue of the Greater Toronto Services Board. Over 140 stakeholders participated. It isn't just that every council was consulted; every councillor in all of the regional governments, in all of the municipal governments and here in the city of Toronto government were invited to participate, and the over-

whelming majority of them took Mr Tonks up on that offer.

At the same time, a very impressive list of other organizations made further representations to Mr Tonks, groups such as the Ontario Professional Planners Institute and Pollution Probe. We had individual ratepayers' associations write in to us or make presentations. We had the GTA economic development partnership and the municipal economic development directors. We had a wide range of groups and individuals who did feel that this bill was worthy of comment. Along the way, obviously a number of changes were made and of course ultimately the bill was introduced for first reading. First reading took place on June 25 of this year and since that time Mr Tonks and the ministry have hardly been standing still.

1700

There have been a number of further consultations. I know the minister himself has made phone calls to a variety of the mayors and regional chairs and has involved them in meetings, and at the same time others have considered the bill. Other councils have actually considered the bill during the normal deliberations of their council meetings. Fourteen of them have passed resolutions, some of which offered further suggestions, further amendments. Fifteen have not bothered to send any further critique, although some have actually said, "You may continue to carry the original position we articulated back in 1997." So we have tremendous comfort that this is a bill that has genuinely received adequate consultation, some might even say too much consultation.

At the GTA mayors' and chairs' meeting just last Friday, a number of mayors approached me and were concerned that this bill was not going to pass in these next few weeks during this session and that the January 1 prospective deadline would not be met. They were very concerned that we would miss an opportunity to start a coordination process that is long overdue.

The member for Hamilton Centre in fact made the observation that this is a very significant part of the province we're talking about. The commerce that takes place, the commuting that takes place in both directions now between the suburbs in the 905 municipalities and the city of Toronto clearly demonstrate that as an economic entity we are one. There is a tremendous incentive for the government to ensure that coordination of all the important services has some kind of a forum and we get beyond the individual or parochial initiatives and perspectives of any municipality.

The reality is that the municipalities have tried to form those sorts of fora in the past, the GTA mayors and chairs being just one example. They have formed the GTA marketing alliance. There are all sorts of other working groups that deal with issues such as sewers that cross municipal boundaries between Toronto and the 905. There's planning for obvious areas of coincidental interest such as the conservation authority, where already all of the municipalities play a role proportional to their share of the area covered by the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. We have lots of precedents of working groups

of various municipal structures designed to integrate services, but we've never captured them all in one group, a group with legitimacy, a group with the stature and the presence in our community to ensure that the debate is as focused, orderly and thorough as it could possibly be.

From the outset, of course, the initial responsibilities of the GTSB will be to ensure coordination of planning issues and hopefully a promotion of various planning strategies. They will from day one have direct responsibility for the budgeting and the overall operation of GO Transit. Clearly, the budget of GO Transit alone means that the GTSB is a body of some significance. GO Transit is playing an increasingly important role in the transportation needs of the greater Toronto area. We've seen an increase in ridership this year and GO Transit is to be complimented for that.

But at the same time, we continue to see increasing bottlenecks on our roads, decreasing average speeds on our highways, particularly roads like the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardiner Expressway, and there is obvious need for even further integration of the various transit systems. This too will be one of the coordinating functions that the GTSB can take on as part of their mandate. We've heard from all of these groups about their individual issues, and they are many.

The member opposite has spoken about the need to balance even the transit requirements of Hamilton and Wentworth. They're not considered part of the GTA, never have been, but GO Transit does have a number of stops which leave what is considered to be the GTA, which ends at Halton region, and go into Hamilton-Wentworth. For that precise reason, we've not only guaranteed them a seat at the table, but, as the minister indicated earlier this afternoon, we're prepared to allow the regional chair to have the votes to ensure that even when it comes to picking the chair of the GTSB, Hamilton and Wentworth will have the appropriate share of responsibility in the oversight of this new coordinating body.

We certainly heard from a great number of councillors that they didn't want this to be another level of government, and I am pleased to say that it is not. It may be another committee that some councillors, mayors and regional chairs sit on, but it has no taxation authority. It gets its money merely by the allocations from the component municipalities. There is no direct election. You and I won't be going to the polls to cast a vote for a GTSB level of government.

The reality is, though, on the other hand, it does provide an opportunity for the politicians we already elect at the municipal level to come together in an appropriate forum with the powers and responsibilities shared on the appropriate pro rata basis and be able to debate and conclude, hopefully, long-term planning decisions which will have a significant impact on how the greater Toronto area grows and develops in the years and decades to come.

I'd like to mention as well that over those two years — over two years now; I guess we're approaching three years if you include the work done by Ms Golden — and in the course of all of those various face-to-face meetings,

the various fora put on by Mr Tonks and Mr Farrow, and of course in comments they've made to the media, we've certainly gotten a lot of very constructive feedback from various politicians and others at the municipal level.

We have the Toronto deputy mayor, Mr Case Ootes, in the Toronto Star on November 25 saying, "We want the GTSB because that's the only way you can address the interregion transportation issues, the waste disposal issues and others that have interregion ramifications."

We've got the president and CEO of the Toronto Board of Trade, in a press release right after the bill was introduced, saying, "The GTSB is needed to cope with the stresses of rapid growth." There's no doubt that there's no part of Ontario that has seen more pressure related to its growth than here in the GTA.

Don Cousens, out in the 905, the mayor of Markham, has said: "We've got to have a way to cross the boundaries. The public isn't served unless we look for a way of working across the GTA." Even Mayor McCallion of the city of Mississauga said that Tonks's proposal would "promote and facilitate coordinated municipal decision-making on issues and services spilling over jurisdictional boundaries."

We've seen that sort of positive sentiment from the overwhelming majority of participants in these various discussion opportunities — the regional chairs. Emil Kolb, for example, has said, "The Greater Toronto Services Board legislation...provides an opportunity for the region of Peel to participate in the coordination of interregional services and infrastructure, such as transit, water, sewer and waste management." We agree.

All across the GTA we've heard that sort of feedback. But what's interesting is that there are other comments that have been heard by the people in Toronto over the past few years that are just as enthusiastic in embracing this concept. There's the quote, "The best hope for balanced growth across the GTA lies in shared planning, coordination and co-operation, so that each part of the super-city can attract the development best suited to it." Those words were, of course, spoken by Lyn McLeod in a 1995 Liberal paper entitled Lyn McLeod on the Greater Toronto Area. Truer words were never spoken. That is precisely what we're delivering in Bill 56.

She went on to say: "Our prosperity and our quality of life will depend on the well-being of the entire region. The outlying areas cannot thrive if the core deteriorates." Again, the then leader of the Liberal Party was bang on: You have to coordinate services, you have to provide a forum for all the mayors and councils to work together to find the greatest efficiencies, the greatest opportunities to deliver services at the lowest possible cost. That's an obligation we share with the municipalities. We're following through on our end of the obligation in Bill 56.

1710

I'd also like to mention a couple of other facts and figures, if I could. I think they're very telling, because we've heard some suggestion from the other side that somehow there will be a missed opportunity or something left out of the process if we don't have further deputations

after second reading of the bill. When you compare the House statistics for the last three governments, they're very telling. In terms of the number of sessional days that have been sat, the number of government bills passed, the number of government bills passed per day, and the amount of time spent on second and third reading of government bills, a very compelling, very clear story emerges.

Under the Liberals, in five years they passed 183 bills. That's an average of two thirds of a bill every day. The NDP were slightly more measured in their approach. They only passed 163 bills; that's 0.4 bills every day. In our first three years, we passed 89 bills; that's one quarter of a bill a day. But let's look at it in terms of the amount of time we spent on second reading. The average time spent on second reading for every government bill in our government has been five hours and 33 minutes. Under the Liberals, it was incredible; it was one hour and 38 minutes.

On third reading — this is compelling — in the last session we spent one hour and 41 minutes on third reading. The Liberal government in their five years spent an average of 15 minutes per government bill on third reading. That, by the way, was in the second session. In the first session, they spent an average of seven minutes — only seven minutes on the stage of the bill which is by far the most significant, that's after the amendments have been put, after public consultation.

One of the most interesting statistics, though, is the time the government has spent consulting with people both in this building and across the province. When you look at the amount of committee travel time outside of Queen's Park, the Liberals spent 349 hours in five years, the NDP 645 hours. In less than three years, we had already accumulated 773 hours of committee hearings all across Ontario, from Kenora to Windsor to Ottawa.

The record is clear. Our government is one that listens, one that consults. This bill is very much the product of that extremely thorough consultation. All the groups that this bill affects directly, the municipal councils, have had at least three opportunities to give their comments, and they have. We've heard them, we've considered them, and a number of amendments will be introduced just arising from comments we've heard over the summer. This bill is an important addition to the legislative framework we're building to guarantee the growth and future prosperity of the greater Toronto area and all of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Curling: As I listened to the member for Scarborough East, how amusing he became. I think he was almost repenting. He spent all that time talking about how democratic his government has been. Tell that to the people outside. With the number of closures you have put on bills, the number of times you have disallowed people to participate, people who want to consult with this government have been shut out. This is the same government that told everyone outside that they're a special interest group and they don't want to listen to them. Now he comes and says, "Look at all these hours," goes and gets these statistics and says, "Boy, did we ever listen."

Ask the people outside about the megacity, when you were going about it and they wanted to talk about how their destiny was determined and have input into the legislation — disallowed. Ask the people who arrived at many of these meetings and were shut out.

Now he's going to brag about the time they took to listen and consult. On much of their legislation, those huge omnibus bills you put in and expect us to just do overnight — you saw how people here literally demonstrated in the House and said there needed to be a democratic process to be heard.

This is the most undemocratic government I have ever seen. They were the scarcest individuals I have ever seen, especially at the beginning of 1995. I couldn't find a Conservative member anywhere. If I wanted to talk to them, I'd have to call them inside of here to have some kind of discussion. Some of their constituents were calling me and saying, "Let me speak to you, because I can't find a Conservative member." The audacity of the member for Scarborough East coming in and talking about how democratic they were.

If you had taken the same approach you have taken with Bill 56, had said, "Let us listen and have some consultation," you'd have had better legislation. That is why, as I said, they took seven attempts to write a property tax bill. Why? They wouldn't listen. They wouldn't consult. They knew it all.

Even though you come in now and reel off statistics, they don't believe you, and they will tell you so later on down the road.

Mr Christopherson: Under the comments I made earlier about the impacts and pressures on local governments that are going to have to fund GO Transit, I would remind us that one of the ways governments can, whether it's because they philosophically want to, like this one, or others who feel they have no alternative, is to privatize operations and contract work out. I'm advised that that indeed is exactly what is happening to GO Transit workers.

I'm advised that members of ATU local 1587 have received a notice that in 120 days, all of GO's operations, including their jobs, will be contracted out. If that's not the case, I certainly would appreciate that clarification from government members. But if it is, it again speaks to the difference in philosophy between this government and ourselves as New Democrats. This government just despises the idea that people who work in the public sector should get a decent wage and a decent set of benefits, so they want to privatize.

Of course what they focus on is that it costs the taxpayer less. The answer to that is, it does, but at what price? At the price of eliminating from our communities and our local economies and the families of our friends and relatives a decent income. When you privatize, the goal is to maximize the profit that can be made — fine in and of itself, but in this case going from public to private means lower wages. That's what it's all about, eliminating decent wages. That's why you brought in Bill 7, that took

away successor rights to many Ontario public sector workers.

This speaks to the sort of thing that can and will happen to GO Transit in terms of local budgets.

Mr O'Toole: In response to the member for Scarborough East, he covered in some detail the technical consultations that have gone on on this particular piece of legislation.

I want to be on the record: This is an important issue in my riding. I have some significant difficulties until it's clarified for me that this isn't another level of government. That being said, there is an expression which has been shared by a number of members in Durham, that form should follow function. We all know that there currently is an organization referred to as the GTA mayors. That group has gotten together primarily under the vision and leadership of Hazel McCallion, arguably a very progressive mayor. She's really been kind of running Peel region, you might say, without any disrespect for Peel region.

1720

There was also a report, referred to as the four mayors' report, and the Oshawa mayor was saying: "We're well enough alone. We can manage it on our own." But in my riding, with part of Uxbridge and Scugog and Clarington, those municipalities have really been co-dependent with the region. I'm stating here that the region of Durham is not as mature as other regions and I've asked the minister to respect the fact that perhaps the time is not now.

I just want to make sure that when I look at one of the sections of the bill dealing with the formation of GT Transit — I don't like the name "Toronto" but it's not against Toronto; Durham region is the area that I live in — but there's a section here dealing with financial arrangements. The board will have the power under section 28 to raise money for its costs by levying amounts on the city of Toronto and the regional municipalities. It's by any other name another tax. I want to make sure that this is not going to cost my constituents more money. How can I be assured until I have all the details?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My concern with this legislation revolves somewhat around transit services that we're going to have. I think there's a need for some kind of coordination; everybody agrees with that. I don't know anybody who wouldn't agree with the need for some coordination of services within Toronto and the adjacent municipalities, which are very important.

I should warn the member for Durham East that I know Hazel McCallion watches this channel very often and he'd better be careful what he says or he's liable to find himself in some considerable trouble.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): But he has Nancy Diamond.

Mr Bradley: He has Nancy Diamond but Hazel has more experience. I want to warn you of that.

My concern is about transit. Not only in metropolitan Toronto and the greater Toronto area, but right in the city of St Catharines there's a need for good transit. The transit commission is meeting tonight in St Catharines. What the transit commission is talking about always is the fact

that no longer does it get 75% of its capital costs covered by the province. No longer is there the more generous operating subsidies that used to be available to encourage public transit, to enable us to have to spend less on widening roads again and again and of course on making an environmentally desirable choice of providing some public transportation. I know the St Catharines Transit Commission will be concerned about that.

I'm interested in the member for Scarborough East — we're talking about transportation — whether he's worried about the fact that, if there were only one active treatment hospital in St Catharines, the St Catharines General, what would happen then in terms of transportation? It's going to put demands on the transportation. We can avoid those demands by keeping the Hotel Dieu Hospital open in St Catharines, and I would like to know if he's in favour of keeping the Hotel Dieu open.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry, we already had the three. That's the fourth one.

Mr Gilchrist: Mr Speaker, you are to be complimented for your superior math skills.

I certainly would like to thank our colleagues on both sides for their comments, and I appreciate the issues they've raised. The member for Hamilton Centre, I'm pleased to share with you that GO Transit jobs are not being contracted out. GT Transit obviously will negotiate a new collective agreement and GO does not anticipate there will be any job losses arising from that.

As well, your comments that somehow this is an assault on certain workers, no, I think we've proved from our actions we are the only government in the last 15 years that is truly committed to the highest net income, after taxes, for all citizens of the province of Ontario, and we aspire that everyone in this province has the highest net income of any jurisdiction in North America.

We've heard other comments, and there's a wealth of quotes that I could have read into the record today. Just today we've heard from the Toronto Board of Trade, and of course they have over 10,000 members, representative of all sizes and types of business, large and small. It's the largest local board of trade.

They say today: "The creation of the Greater Toronto Services Board is an integral piece in the GTA governance reform process, and the legislation should be passed this year. The GTA is a focus of economic activity and power in today's economy, but it needs to have a governing body that can make long-term plans affecting the city region.... We believe that the need to establish the GTSB is more urgent than ever."

And who could possibly disagree with the Toronto Star? The Toronto Star, in their editorial today, says, "Years from now, we're confident that the creation of the Greater Toronto Services Board will be seen for what it truly is — a visionary step forward." I agree with the Toronto Star.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Alvin Curling): Further debate? Member for Yorkview.

Mr Sergio: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I have to tell you that it's a different view and a different perspective sitting there from anywhere else in the chamber.

I appreciate having the opportunity to make a few comments on this most important piece of legislation. We are dealing today with a piece of legislation that not only affects the Toronto metropolitan area, or the GTA, but a wider area as well. The bill as it has been written deals with the establishment of the Greater Toronto Services Board and the Greater Toronto Transit Authority and the amendment of the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority Act. It does a number of important things and I am pleased that this has finally come to the House.

I know Mr Alan Tonks, the former chairman of Metropolitan Toronto, has been working very hard on this. I have to say "very hard" because I have met with him on a number of occasions, I have had meetings with him as well, and I know that during the process of evaluating the situation and getting support from the GTA members, the mayors and members of council and members of the various regional councils as well, it wasn't very easy for him.

He must be somewhat relieved that we are at this stage now, but I have to tell you that the feeling I received in attending some of those meetings and speaking to some of the outlying area elected members, that is, regional chairs, members in the GTA and members of the various councils, was that he didn't have an easy ride, and I'm sure there are still some members out there in the GTA who are not too happy to deal with Bill 56 as it was introduced by the government.

As has been said by some members of even the government, including the member for Scarborough East, quoting our member Lyn McLeod — when she speaks, she knows the issues and she knows what she's saying and she was quite correct when she made those remarks with respect to the GTA. I'm pleased to say that the members on the government side recognized what Lyn McLeod did indeed say.

But it is an important issue. Why? Recently, for example, when we dealt with Bill 70, concerning the privatization of Highway 407, almost no one from the deputants that we listened to, the mayors, regional councillors, regional chairs, spoke directly in length to the merits of privatizing or not privatizing 407. What they addressed their concerns to, and rightly so, is how 407 would affect their local municipalities.

I'm not saying that they were parochial in their views because, yes, they were speaking on behalf of their own municipalities. They were speaking on the interests of the people they represent. We had a comment from the mayor of Markham, who said, "We'd like to have 407 because this is going to bring development, it's going to improve the traffic situation, it's going to be better for our communities." Yes, indeed.

The same comments were expressed, if I remember well, by the regional chair of Halton region. They were expressed by the mayor of Oakville. They said, "We need it." Yes, indeed, for many years we have not really

attacked the transportation problem that affects not only Metropolitan Toronto but the general area as well.

1730

So, yes, we have to do something, because there are certain areas where traffic is strangling the potential of those regions. I'll tell you, there are many people who, day in and day out, are coming into Toronto and leaving Toronto as well. We have too much traffic congestion. So what we are proposing, to extend the 407 east and west, is indeed fine. But let me go back to why they did not address the real issue in depth, if it's worthwhile to sell it or not to sell it. I will not deviate into that, because it's another issue and I could speak for about an hour on that alone. But they were saying, "If you do extend the 407 in our municipalities, we want certain things to be done, and done the way we see it, the way we feel it's going to improve traffic in our community."

For example, one of the councillors from Markham said: "We want to see ramps at a particular location, located in a particular way. We want to see landscaping a particular way, to our standards. We would like to have noise attenuation, sound barriers."

Just to give you an example of the size of the problem — and I'm pleased to see that the minister is here and may take some notes. If they are not in the bill, I hope they will bring some amendments to incorporate some of that so this will allay the fears and alleviate the concerns of those regions as well. This is telling us that they have reasonable, serious concerns when it comes to matters affecting their territory. I'm not speaking about the NIMBY syndrome, not-in-my-backyard syndrome. They were saying, genuinely, "If you do something in our area, we'd like to have input, and that's the way we would like to see it." The same concerns were expressed by the members about the extension of the 407 on the other side, on the west and south side. They said, "Yes, please do it, do it soon, but we'd like to have certain things our way." That's fine. That's wonderful.

Why do I say this, and why is it important? Once you create this — call it a board, call it a committee — it's another level of government. It's another layer no matter how you split it. Even though, as the member for Scarborough East correctly said, and I have to give him credit, we don't have to vote for these people, they have already been elected by their own local council, what's going to happen is that the member from Mississauga may not see it the same way as the member from Pickering or the mayor of Markham or the mayor of Richmond Hill or the mayor of Vaughan. That's when we are going to have serious problems.

While I laud the minister for bringing forth this bill, I have to say — and I only arrived, Mr Speaker, if you allow me, up to page 28. I was trying to really go through it very thoroughly. I have to make just one comment on the last page, because I think it's important that the minister, who is present today, hear this, about the problems that we are going to be facing and how they will be dealt with. If we don't do it right, Minister, this is going to come back to haunt us, it's going to come back to haunt future

governments in a very diverse and negative manner. It's not only that the government of the day is going to be affected; it's going to affect the people in those regions.

We are saying that if we don't do it right the first time, we are going to end up with a number of other bills. It has been mentioned by other speakers with the tax reform, and, Minister, we still don't have it right. We have had since the introduction of Bill 61, I believe, the original bill of the tax reform, another seven bills. We have seen this with bill after bill. But this is important, this is too important, because it's affecting the core, the heart of Ontario, the region that is most in growth, it's sprawling. It's affecting a lot of politicians, I have to say. It's affecting a lot of people as well.

Let me read just the section where I ended up while I was trying to review it. Section 66, for example, deals with payments to GT Transit and whatever: "This section applies with respect to a bylaw of the board under clause 61(1)(d)...." What does clause 61(1)(d) say? Let's see. Section 61 says, "For the purpose of carrying out its object under paragraph 2 of section 3, the board may, by bylaw" — and here comes the dangerous part, and this is only one part. This is only one eye-opener, if you will, because once you deal with the GTA and the various interests, the various interested politicians, interest groups, there are a number of other problems.

What does this say? "The board may, by bylaw" — and we are speaking here of section 61, which does confer powers to the board, Minister —

"(a) approve, with the modifications it considers appropriate, the annual operating and capital budgets submitted to it by GT Transit;

"(b) apportion the costs of GT Transit, including the board's cost of borrowing for the purposes of GT Transit, among the participating municipalities" — this board will have the power to:

"(c) borrow money for, and pay such money to, GT Transit in respect of its capital requirements and issue debentures for the debt, subject to the Ontario Municipal Board Act."

It goes on in various length as to the powers conferred upon this board. When you have a board with such power, surely along the way you're going to have infighting among those 40 board members, whatever the final numbers may be. You're going to have such a chaotic situation if it's not done well that we will regret the day we did it.

Let me just finish with this by reading perhaps the most important part of section 61. The board can "do any other things incidental or conducive to the attainment of its object under paragraph 2 of section 3."

If I were either one of those bureaucrats or residents or elected members in the GTA, if you will, I would want to know how far, how much power this board has. What section 61 says right in here is that they can "do any other things incidental or conducive to the attainment of its object under paragraph 2 of section 3."

I would be a bit terrified. I'm scared, even though I won't be one of those members. But I tell you, I would

seriously question this enormous power that the board will receive when this bill is proclaimed into law.

1740

My time is fast coming to a close. Knowing the knowledge, knowing the experience, knowing the amount of time that former Chairman Alan Tonks has spent on the issue, I hope we will be able to give this new board a workable document, where they can truly work in such a way that is going to benefit all those particular areas.

I won't question for a second the good intentions of the government or of the minister when they ordered this bill to be written, but I'm just being cautious. We have already said that we'd like to support it because at least we are moving somewhere, but I'm just cautioning the minister and the government. We were not an integral part of those comments in those meetings with the various chairs of other regions, local councillors and local mayors. I am sure of them as well.

Mr Tonks has been working on this for quite some time. I have to say that I'm delighted that Mr Tonks has been operating from an office in the Black Creek Conservation Area. For those members who are not familiar with the Black Creek Conservation Area, it's a wonderful place and I urge every member to visit. Mr Tonks has been operating from that particular area and I know he has been working hard with the mayors and councillors and other groups within those regions. I know he has been frustrated with some of those local politicians for not coming on board sooner so that Mr Tonks could have introduced to the government his views on this particular piece of legislation.

Is it needed? Yes, it is needed. But when we see that we are confronted with another layer of government — and we are really swimming in the dark at this particular stage because we don't know how it's going to work. We just have a feeling that there are going to be problems down the road, because what may be good for Scarborough and Markham may not be good for Mississauga or York region or Richmond Hill, or the mayor of Markham as well. They have been very vociferous when it comes to their communities, and rightly so. I give them credit for speaking up with respect to their communities.

I'm saying to the minister, do it right. Make sure that we try to eliminate as many of the problems that we will encounter in the future as we can.

I mentioned the 407, just one particular item, because I saw the reaction of those people when they came to the public hearings. They were not jealous of their particular community, but I would say they spoke with so much zeal on what they wanted for their communities, how they wanted certain things to be seen in their communities.

Let me end by reminding the minister that with the powers conferred on this board to do practically whatever they want, especially when it comes to levies and fees — it's right in here — they are saying that we may see a lot of in-fighting among the members of the new board.

Let me mention to you quickly that it's happening now as we talk, in the last few days. The mayor of Mississauga is up against members of city council from Etobicoke, who

don't want a Mississauga bus to go on I believe Burnhamthorpe or one of their streets. Maybe they're right, maybe they're not — I don't have all the information — but this is the in-fighting. This is the problem we may face. And that's only one bus on one particular route.

I'm saying to the minister — and I thank him for being in the House — listen carefully, and hopefully bring some changes that will eliminate a lot of the complaints, a lot of the concerns that you have heard and that we have mentioned in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Marchese: The member for Yorkview has raised a number of issues, and I want to add a few more issues to the table in my two minutes, because I won't have an opportunity to speak today.

While I agree that we need to be able to coordinate a whole lot of services in the GTA with Toronto — no disagreement with that — this bill only addresses in part some of the concerns we have raised in the past, and most of the power seems to relate only to GO Transit and very little else. That is, in my view, a deficiency of what else needs to be dealt with. We need to look at regional roads and expressways, waste management, sewer and water distribution and treatment, hydroelectric distribution, police board coordination, regional and infrastructure planning, social planning and coordination, watershed management, economic development. All these issues, in my view, are critical and of interest, I would think, to people from the villages of Caledon to the other folks in the east end, in Pickering, and even the south.

My sense is that this board can look at these matters, even though there appear to be no explicit powers in terms of what they could do. But even if they dealt with them, you would need a two thirds majority of that group of 40 people to be able to do anything. It essentially straitjackets the efficacy of this particular board. You'll never be able to get a two thirds majority vote to do anything, particularly when people in Durham, York and other places are nervous about this board and its powers, afraid of what they could do, presumably, to their communities.

I'm not sure. This is a little step, but in terms of dealing with all the other issues that I'm sure the Minister of Housing is concerned about, this won't do it. We need something greater than what we've got, and I think we need amendments to make this bill much more effective than it is.

Hon Mr Leach: My response is first to my colleague from the NDP when he says that the bill doesn't go far enough. I wouldn't disagree with that. I think this board eventually will have far more to do than this bill initially gives it. But as the member from Scarborough in the Liberal Party said last night, you have to walk before you run. Or perhaps I can put it in my good friend's terms, which he might have more appreciation for: Rome wasn't built in a day. It takes some time to make sure that all the aspects of a board that's going to have the responsibilities that this board will ultimately have — they need the opportunity to get up and get running slowly, so they can

have appreciation of the magnitude of the issues they're going to have to deal with over time.

They will have the responsibility, and it's a large responsibility, to look after the operating and funding of GO Transit and to make sure that those services are run in a very efficient manner, as they presently are. They will have the opportunity, with a two thirds majority, to create strategies to deal with other issues, to deal with waste management, to deal with economic development. All those issues, all those things they will have the opportunity to look at, and so they should. But it's a new agency, a new board. It should be given the opportunity to transform into its new regime without having a mountain of responsibilities dumped on it in its first mandate.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? The member for Yorkview, you have two minutes to wrap up.

Mr Sergio: Let me thank the member for Fort York and the member for St George-St David, our minister. Let me say, just to add to the comments I made, there are planning issues and zoning and rezoning issues which are very big issues in those areas. They are the fastest-growing areas in Ontario and perhaps in Canada as well. When it comes to rezoning and zoning issues, that is really

when we will see the sparks flying in those particular communities.

I am saying again to the minister, this is not just about creating a new layer, a new group, a board, whatever you want to call it; the fact is on that board we are going to have local elected politicians. I have to say they will be trying to protect their turf, and rightly so, because they will want the best for their community.

I'm repeating to the minister, please listen carefully to what the opposition is saying, listen to what the people are saying. Don't rush it. Get it right. If I can put in this plug, Alan Tonks may be the perfect person to carry on the duty when your government is ready to appoint the first chairman of this superboard.

Hon Mr Leach: It's not an appointment.

Mr Sergio: You say you do not appoint them. They are elected. But he will have good experience. He will be in a good position.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Seeing that it's almost 6 of the clock, does anybody object if we adjourn until 6:30? If there is no objection, the House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1752.

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Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 November 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 novembre 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Mrs Ecker, on behalf of Mr Tsubouchi, moved third reading of Bill 25, An Act to reduce red tape by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts / *Projet de loi 25, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives en modifiant ou abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Rosario Marchese): The member for Hamilton West.

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I would like to ask for unanimous consent to share my time with the members for Simcoe Centre and Peterborough.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mrs Ross: The bill that we're debating tonight is Bill 25, a red tape bill. As we all know, unnecessary rules and regulations cost the Canadian economy billions of dollars every year. In fact, according to one estimate, that number stands at \$85.7 billion in 1993-94 alone.

Red tape costs business money. It ties the hands of business so tightly that it restricts growth and discourages hiring. It can cause serious delays in launching new products and services or expanding a company's operations. It costs consumers money: approximately \$12,000 for every household in Canada, according to estimates. And it costs government money, money that could be spent on other things, such as key priority areas of health care and education.

This legislation would eliminate unnecessary and wasteful procedures. It includes hundreds of amendments to more than 100 acts at eight ministries and continues the government's work in cutting red tape and unnecessary regulation.

I would like to go through a couple of the amendments that appear under schedule E, which is the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. There are amendments to save time and money and to provide greater convenience for all interested parties under the Land Titles Act. That amendment would allow for hearings to be held in locations other than the registry office or the office of the director of titles. So you can see that would help

people and make government services much more accessible for them.

Under the Vital Statistics Act: There is a requirement for a payment for a special fee of 25 cents when a sub-registrar issues a burial permit. That's very old and outdated, and I bet you there are a lot of people around here who didn't even know that such a requirement existed, so we're eliminating that requirement.

Under the Registry Act: Because of the changing technological advances that are made, people can now register through the Registry Act electronically. We're changing the act to provide for methods of payments through technological advances that are out there. Currently fees have to be delivered either personally or by mail to a land registry office, so this will make things happen much more quickly and again, because of the technological advances, it's important that we recognize that.

Under the Corporations Act: The amendment will permit directors' meetings to be handled by telephone and other communications technology, saving business time and money. Again, that recognizes the technological advances that are currently out there, and certainly up in the northern communities that would be an advance for them.

Under the Loan Brokers Act: This amendment would permit the ministry to issue cease-and-desist orders against people violating the act. This is a very important amendment, because it allows the ministry the administrative tools to quickly and efficiently deal with people who are violating the act. It's very, very important.

Under the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act: There is an amendment in the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act that would establish, subject to the minister's approval, consumer protection programs such as a provincial compensation fund. I think that's a very important amendment, again, to protect the consumer.

A lot of the changes that are in this red tape bill are changes that we brought forward to address technological advances, to get rid of those acts that are no longer necessary and to make things easier and more accessible for people to access government services.

Some of the amendments were made at two ministries after committee hearings, and three amendments have been made at the Ministry of Health.

The first amendment would ensure that specific confidentiality provisions in the bill for health professional quality assurance programs does not weaken the general confidentiality provisions of the Regulated Health Profes-

sions Act. I'm sure you're aware that confidentiality is a very important issue these days. People are very concerned that their records are kept confidential, so that's an important amendment in this act.

The second amendment adds a cross-reference to non-exemptible registration requirements in health professional registration regulations.

The third amendment at the Ministry of Health removes a provision which would have required health professional colleges, under certain conditions, to consider late submissions from members who are the subject of a complaint. This provision had been proposed to expedite the consideration of complaints.

During the committee process, we heard from a number of people representing various colleges under the regulated health professions who felt that this amendment could lead to abuse and would possibly frustrate their ability to handle complaints within the time frame that they had before them, which was 120 days required by the statute. We listened closely to them and changed the original wording under the Regulated Health Professions Act and returned it to what it said in the first place, because of what they had to say to us.

Under schedule I, the Ministry of Natural Resources: There are several amendments under the Ministry of Natural Resources, and I'd like to go through a couple of those as well, so people understand the types of things that we're doing through this red tape bill.

Under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act: That act is being amended to ensure that industry contributions to the forest renewal fund are exempt from the federal goods and services tax. This will ensure that all of the money that is collected is dedicated to forest renewal. I know the Speaker is very interested in forest renewal. That's a very, very important amendment.

There are three acts relating to forestry on private land and three outdated and obsolete acts. The three that are related to forestry and private land will be consolidated under the Forestry Act and the three that are outdated and obsolete will of course be repealed, because there is no longer any use keeping them on the books.

Under the Forest Fires Prevention Act: That act is being amended to allow restricted fire zones to be declared or rescinded by minister's order rather than regulation. That of course is in order that we can provide much faster service to the people. I'm sure if there was raging fire, Mr Speaker, you wouldn't want to see us have to come back to get the regulations changed. You would like to see us move on that very quickly, so that's exactly what we've tried —

1840

Interjection.

Mrs Ross: Yes, the Speaker would want to see something happen very quickly. That is why that amendment is in there.

There are many, many amendments in here that address accessibility to government services, address technological change, address providing service quicker, faster, and getting rid of outdated and old acts that are no longer required.

An amendment at the Ministry of Natural Resources would change the definition of "wetlands" in the Conservation Authorities Act. That was a concern that we heard quite a bit about at the committee hearings, particularly from farmers who were concerned with the definition of "wetlands." They thought that if there was a spout that was putting water out on to their property and it stayed for a period of time, that could be determined as a wetland when in fact it was just a temporary pond, you might want to say, created through the waterfall. We looked at those amendments and made sure that definition would be more clearly consistent with provincial policy statements under the Planning Act.

Changes to the act under Bill 25 would clarify and focus the jurisdiction of conservation authorities and, by defining a number of terms such as "wetlands," would ensure that strong measures are maintained to protect the environment.

Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act under this bill would also ensure that conservation authorities have the power to intervene quickly in the case of environmental emergencies.

An amendment has been made that would also set out specific conditions under which conservation authority officers can enter on to private lands for the purposes of inspection and enforcement of regulations. That was a concern expressed to us at the committee by many people who made presentations before us, so we made sure we put that amendment in there. This amendment does respond particularly to rural landowners who were concerned about notifications and permission on their private property. They wanted to make sure that when someone came on their property, they would provide them with appropriate notification and receive permission to go on their property. I'm sure, Mr Speaker, you can understand that.

Mr Speaker, the purpose of the Red Tape Reduction Act, as I know you're aware, is to eliminate many pieces of regulations and statutes that have been on the books for a long time that are no longer required, that are obsolete, and to make access to government services much easier, to recognize the changing needs of the consumer out there, to recognize the changing technological advances and to eliminate a lot of that red tape as a result of those things.

Frank Sheehan, the chair of the Red Tape Commission, has said that red tape is not a problem that's unique to this province. It's common in all of the provinces and in fact is common across countries around the world where regulation is used to fulfill promises, to respond to crises and to protect their citizens. Mr Sheehan also points out that there are good reasons why government has regulations, but we must be on guard against regulations that discourage growth and economic development.

I think the Red Tape Commission has done a magnificent job in looking at the various pieces of legislation that have been in existence around this province for many decades and looking at how we can refine and revise them and make them much more up to date and respond to consumers' needs.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Struck a balance.

Mrs Ross: Exactly. As the member says, we struck a balance by looking at what type of regulations we should ensure are still there and what type of rules and regulations we can eliminate as a result of outdated pieces of legislation.

When we find that regulations are burdensome, they discourage entrepreneurs. The Speaker knows that we want to encourage entrepreneurs in Ontario. Sometimes they simply create inconvenience, and we don't want to do that. This bill is designed to eliminate those pieces of legislation, and I'm very pleased to support this bill and urge all members to support it.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm very pleased to join in the debate tonight on third reading of Bill 25, An Act to reduce red tape by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts.

Being a member of the Red Tape Commission, it's a tremendous opportunity to be able to eliminate the barriers that are put in the way of business and, in effect, the efficient operation of government. That's what red tape is about. It's about eliminating barriers to make it easier, faster and less expensive for both business and the public in their dealings with whatever ministry they deal with; smoothing the way for business to start up, create jobs and carry on business in Ontario; streamlining ministry administration that will improve customer service, thus making it easier and less time-consuming to deal with the ministry; and simplifying the processes in order to reduce overlaps with other legislation and improve overall efficiency.

One of the fundamental thrusts of this legislation, especially dealing with the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, is really basically catching up to the changes that have been made in information technology that we've experienced for many years but the ministry hasn't changed their procedures to catch up with the information technology that is out there in the business world. That's what's very important about some of these changes.

I would just refer to one very simple change with respect to the Corporations Act. We are amending the act to permit directors' meetings by telephone or other communications technology, saving businesses time and money. Currently, directors must be physically present to hold a meeting. Even if you're talking about the smallest of corporations, where you're dealing with, if you just want to call it that, a ma-and-pa operation, you'll still have both the husband and the wife and the children, if they're involved in the business. To conduct the business of the corporation, they all have to be present in the directors' meetings to pass the resolutions, pass the bylaws, that allow the corporation to run.

This makes a lot of sense. If you're not in the same location at the same time, if you're in a large metropolitan community like Toronto, it may not be that easy if you're in one part of the city, over in Etobicoke, and another one is over in North York, to be able to get together in one

central location. Obviously that's a little bit different. In my riding of Simcoe Centre we're much smaller and there's not as much difficulty to get into one spot at the same time. But the bottom line is that this a fundamental change that I think will make even small corporations as well as large corporations much more efficient in the way they conduct business, because that's the only way you can conduct business in a corporation, through the directors and whoever you designate to operate the business.

Other changes help prepare the way for electronic registration and other processes in the land registry offices. That is a must in today's business environment, especially in my riding of Simcoe Centre, which is a very high-growth area, tremendous amount of housing starts and construction in the area. This is just reflective of the economic growth that is experienced in this province. Quite frankly, the registry office is outdated in terms of the up-to-date technology. This is going to make things much more efficient and hopefully less pricey for the consumer.

1850

These changes include an amendment to the Land Titles Act which can reduce information required for registering power-of-sale documents and an amendment to the Registry Act which will support electronic funds payment and other payment methods. Currently, fees must be paid and documents delivered personally or by mail to a land registry office to be deemed registered. As well, the Registry Act is being changed to allow the ministry to accept notarized copies of certain documents that may be deposited instead of original documents. Currently, the client is required to provide the ministry with an original document, which is microfilmed and then destroyed. That doesn't make a lot of sense.

Still other changes simplify the language used and make a number of acts more consistent across government. As well, several amendments deal with replacing the requirement for the Lieutenant Governor in Council appointments with ministers' or deputy ministers' appointments. This will speed up many processes and be more cost-effective.

These changes, in my opinion, definitely will create jobs. It's the businesses that create the jobs, so if we make it simpler for businesses in terms of how they can operate, less expensive, they're certainly going to be looking to ways to increase their revenues and increase profits in terms of creating jobs. We believe these amendments will send a clear message that Ontario is open for business. Businesses will be spending less time jumping through administration hoops, allowing them to spend more time concentrating on what they do best, which is fuelling the economy and creating jobs.

Certainly there will be dollar savings from this type of approach that is being taken. It's difficult to place a total value on it, but in terms of the time saving businesses will experience from being able to do their business this way there is no doubt that if you save time, that gives you greater opportunity to do your own business, and that is going to create not only savings but revenue for the

company. You have to look at it from the point of view of the savings from an administrative point of view in terms of dealing with legal counsel, dealing with different business-type machines, but also the opportunity that you gain from the saved time to operate your business. That's really one of the greatest drawbacks that businesses face, especially small businesses, in being able to operate their businesses, the administration requirements in doing business with the government, making sure have satisfied the government requirements. What we're trying to do is make it much simpler for businesses to operate.

Consultation has taken place in a number of areas. For example, in considering changes to the legislation covering both real and personal property and the legislation dealing with business registrations, we consulted with the Canadian Bar Association for Ontario and they provided significant input. In other cases, industry groups have been consulted and they have been generally supportive. It is worth repeating that many of the amendments going forward are the kind that smooth the way for better service to all stakeholders and the public. In fact, some amendments are in response to past criticisms by the public and business of excessive red tape and administrative hoops. That's one of the fundamental approaches and the raison d'être for why the Red Tape Commission was set up.

The fundamental question, and one of my favourite areas, and I think fundamental for why we are representatives in this House and why we are sent here is, we are not only here to obviously be the watchdog or the bureaucracy ensuring that our constituents are served, but we're also here to protect consumers. Two of the acts being amended will provide additional protection for consumers in specific areas of the marketplace.

One of these is the change to the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. This change would allow the administrative authority set up by the real estate industry — and I just want to make clear that what we did a few years ago was allow the real estate industry to be self-governed, as we have with other businesses — for example, the travel industry and the builders' association — with respect to the home warranty program. They self-regulate themselves. What this change is going to do is that the administrative authority set up by the real estate industry is to establish consumer protection programs, such as a compensation fund, in which registrants would be obliged to participate. Such compensation funds have proven to provide important protection for consumers in such areas as travel and motor vehicle dealers.

Another amendment designed to improve consumer protection is being made to the Loan Brokers Act. This change will allow the ministry to issue cease-and-desist orders against loan brokers who, for example, continue to violate the law even when charges have been laid and the broker has been convicted under the act. This will strengthen protection for consumers by preventing unscrupulous loan brokers from continuing to take money from a consumer before the consumer has actually received the loan.

Another part of this package is that the amendments to the Corporations Act significantly cut red tape for non-profit corporations and encourage people to volunteer. It includes a provision to provide an audit exemption, subject to the unanimous member approval for all non-profit corporations, excepting charities, if the annual income of the corporation is less than \$10,000. This will save these organizations money which they can then direct to their primary purpose.

Another amendment will permit non-profit corporations that are not charities to indemnify officers for liability arising from the performance of their duties on behalf of the corporations. That is a fundamental area because, for the first time, such non-profit corporations will be able to purchase liability insurance for directors and officers. Obviously, that's a significant area for people who want to get out and volunteer but, quite frankly, they don't want to put their own personal financial situation at risk for doing good. That's a fundamental change. Obviously, that is a clear signal that we want to encourage volunteerism in non-profit corporations. We're basically taking the action to ensure that those individuals' personal livelihoods and financial well-being are protected when they're doing good for the community.

Dropping the audit requirement could save non-profit corporations at least \$2,000 per year in annual audit fees, a considerable sum for organizations that often have budgets of less than \$10,000. As well, the inability to purchase liability insurance may have deterred, as I said, many people from serving on these volunteer boards. We have to make sure that the strength of the community is based on these non-profit corporations that bring in volunteers who are willing to give their own time and energy for free. If you can get the best people out who are willing to devote their time to a worthy cause and they know they're not putting themselves at risk, then they're going to come out. That can only benefit the community because, after all, the primary purpose of non-profit corporations is to do good.

Will charitable organizations be able to purchase liability insurance? Charitable organizations may purchase insurance only if they comply with charities law, including the Charities Accounting Act, which is being administered by the Ministry of the Attorney General. While a great number of charities are non-profit corporations, there are many non-profit corporations which are not charities. Everything from your local bowling league to community groups such as ratepayers' associations and tenant groups, all the way up to large industry associations could be non-profit corporations but they may not be registered charities. That's a very fundamental point, but the bottom line is, that is already covered by the Charities Accounting Act and administered by the Ministry of the Attorney General.

There are also changes to the Bailiffs Act which are designed to streamline the appointment of bailiffs and improve the complaint-handling process. This will be achieved by consolidating all functions under the Bailiffs Act at the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Rela-

tions. Responsibility is currently shared by the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations and the Ministry of the Attorney General. We believe that by improving and speeding up the complaints-handling process we will be able to assist consumers faster and more effectively.

Under the Bailiffs Act, there is reference to fees of \$2.25. The Bailiffs Act amendments are: "(1) A bailiff shall not charge, for the sale of goods exempted from distress or seizure, a sum greater than \$2 plus the actual and necessary payments for possession money."

"A person requiring an assessment shall pay the" local "registrar," the Ontario Court (General Division), "a fee of 25 cents for the examination" concerning the costs of distress.

These fees are currently provisions from the Costs of Distress Act which are simply being incorporated into the Bailiffs Act. Whether these amounts should be changed will be looked at as the ministry's larger review of the regulation of bailiffs, which is a very important area.

1900

There are also changes to the Theatres Act. Members of the Ontario Film Review Board are appointed to represent the community and reflect community values. That hasn't changed. The purpose of the amendments to the Theatres Act is to allow the board to continue to perform these duties effectively and with greater speed and efficiency. The changes will give the board the flexibility to determine whether a panel of two or more persons is necessary to approve and classify a film. As well, it will provide the option of approving and classifying films by methods other than viewing, as may be prescribed by regulation. Regulations will be developed. Other methods could include, for example, accepting classification of a film by another province or prior classification of a film in a different format, such as a 35-millimetre film to video, and considerations such as the source of the film and the nature of the film.

These changes would reduce the cost for the Ontario Film Review Board. Also, by speeding up the classification process, films and videos can be approved and in circulation sooner. This is good for business and good for consumers, as it will get the product out across the province faster. As well, these changes will maintain community standards.

Obviously, the entertainment industry, through the films and videos, is a very significant part of our economy, and it's something we should have done a long time ago to ensure that the distribution process, while maintaining community values and the standards that have been set by the film board, does not hinder the marketplace. If the process is delayed through administration and essentially not keeping up with the technology, then obviously we're not doing our job in terms of supporting the people who do a lot of hard work and have devoted their business lives to the entertainment industry through video and film.

There are some other issues I want to address, and one of them is under the Liquor Licence Act. We've dropped the requirement for holders of liquor sales licences to be Canadian citizens or landed immigrants. What that means

is that foreign investors in the province are going to be allowed to be holders of liquor sales licences. The fact is that foreign investors have been allowed to own licensed premises for some time but had to set up a Canadian shell company to comply with the requirement, which is the liquor sales licence. So what you have is someone who is not a Canadian or a landed immigrant owning a restaurant, but they cannot have a licence to operate that restaurant. That doesn't make a lot of sense if you're going to allow them to own the restaurant, put up their investment, employ people, serve the public, and then they have to set up a Canadian shell company to comply with the Liquor Licence Act requirements. This amendment removes that impediment to foreign investors.

Our government believes strongly in removing barriers to investment and encouraging trade in Ontario. This amendment to the Liquor Licence Act helps remove barriers to economic growth and new investment. We are rolling out the red carpet rather than the red tape for the province's job creators. Obviously, in the restaurant or entertainment industry, the fact is that if you don't have a liquor licence, you're not going to be able to operate and be successful. So it's very fundamental that we establish a level playing field. If we're going to allow foreign interests to own and operate a restaurant or an entertainment establishment, then we shouldn't have different standards with respect to their being able to obtain a liquor licence. I think that's not only fair but it balances the interests that we're not only trying to protect but also trying to encourage in terms of getting foreign investment into this province.

We're also looking at allowing manufacturers of alcohol to have a financial interest in the business of licensees. The question is whether this will restrict competition and how does this fit into the concept of cutting red tape and encouraging business. The answer is that in the past there have been a number of regulatory exemptions to allow limited manufacturing involvement in certain holders of liquor licences; for example, SkyDome and Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto. By amending the Liquor Licence Act to formally allow the board the discretion to permit this practice, a regulation is no longer needed and the board will be able to respond more quickly to such requests, which cuts red tape. As well, this change will encourage limited investment in a licensed establishment, which is good for business and the economy.

There will continue to be a prohibition against manufacturers receiving liquor sales licences except for licensed premises on a liquor manufacturing site and against licensees selling only the product of one manufacturer exclusively. By allowing manufacturers of alcohol that have a financial interest in the business of a licensee — I used the example of the SkyDome with the restaurants they have there, and also Maple Leaf Gardens — we're not getting in the way of their being able to operate their business and we're not setting any precedent in terms of what I talked about before, which is the prohibition against manufacturers receiving liquor sales licences. This is much more indirect, and against licensees selling only the product of one manufacturer exclusively.

The board's ability to refuse requests for public meetings when there is a complaint about a potential licensee has been reviewed. Speaking from experience, that is certainly a very significant detriment. If you have put time and money in setting up a business, for example, a restaurant, and the final piece of the puzzle is to get that liquor licence, which all your competitors have, and you're ready to go because you've already done all your leaseholds — you've done everything; it's all ready to go — and someone puts an objection in and it's a bogus objection, it's basically designed to prevent you from getting into operation, that could be similar to, for example under the Ontario Municipal Board proceedings, where you're wanting to get your land rezoned so you can get into a commercial operation, and your competitor puts in an objection and the only reason why they're objecting is to keep you out of business.

That's why we should work very hard to make sure we do not allow a procedure to be put in place that not only will keep people from competing but also puts them out of business because of the fact that a complaint has been put in. At least under the Ontario Municipal Board, someone who puts in a frivolous and vexatious objection will face severe cost consequences and action from the board for having done that. But if you've got deep enough pockets to be able to do that type of action, it may be worth it to keep someone out of the business.

Under the Liquor Licence Act, there aren't those types of consequences. If someone objects and it's a frivolous and vexatious objection, there are no cost consequences, because there's a hearing set up through the Liquor Licence Board and they come up and hear it. I've been involved in them and they can be lengthy proceedings. They're always very emotional. But if the sole purpose is to delay your opening — because you don't get hearings overnight; these hearings take months and months to get — then what do we accomplish? We've set up a procedure which doesn't protect the public, which it was designed to do. It is used as a weapon to keep someone out of their competitive area and to get them out of business, and that's not what the liquor licence proceedings were set up for. They were set up to protect the public interest where someone who wants to get a liquor licence shouldn't get one because, on balance, the public interest will be impacted.

1910

The purpose of the amendments to the Liquor Licence Act is to stop frivolous or vexatious objections from creating unnecessary delays in the processing of a liquor sales licence. Some examples are objections from people who oppose liquor in general, those who are not area residents and other businesses that simply want to reduce competition or stall the approval of a bona fide application. I would say to you that's not what we want to encourage. I recall speaking about this in the past, that we want to ensure that we're not putting in place a procedure whereby we're essentially putting up a barrier for people who want to get into business.

Everybody knows that the restaurant industry is a volatile industry at best, driven by market forces, because

it's very competitive. The timing of when your business is in place may be the sole reason why you survive. If you've gone through the painstaking exercise of making sure you've got the proper location, you've got the right lease, you've got the right product, you've got your staff all hired and everything is ready to go, and you put your application in for the liquor licence and all of a sudden someone at the last moment decides to object — obviously there are going to be people who oppose liquor in general, but if you're in an area where there are a number of liquor establishments, that's not a legitimate complaint; that's not a legitimate objection. Or if they're not even area residents, what would be their nexus to the community? What would be their point in objecting to a licensed establishment where they don't even reside? There is no basis for that. I can't even explain why someone would want to do that, but obviously it happens, Mr Speaker. I know that would be bothersome even to you.

We look at the area where other businesses simply want to reduce competition or stall the approval of a bona fide application. That is really the *raison d'être* of why we would not want this procedure to be used as a weapon, to make sure that your business is protected. After all, you've got a liquor licence and there's no reason why your competitor shouldn't be able to get one too.

We've consulted with community groups and stakeholders about the amendments to the Liquor Licence Act. These amendments are meant to streamline government operations, simplify requirements for the public and business and even the playing field. These amendments don't reduce any existing controls or eliminate the need for public input. That's the bottom line: We need public input. There will continue to be considerable ongoing consultation with the community groups and stakeholders.

In the area of liquor licences, and I don't want to belabour the point, obviously there is a procedure in place to protect the public. We just don't want it to be used on a frivolous or vexatious basis. We want to encourage people who want to get into the entertainment and restaurant business. There are thousands and thousands of restaurants in this province; they create thousands and thousands of jobs. That also applies to the entertainment industry. We want to be fair.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am very pleased to speak to Bill 25 along with my two colleagues, particularly because of the fact that I have the pleasure of being one of the 11 members of the Red Tape Commission. Certainly this legislation advances the work of the Red Tape Commission, which was created in 1995 to fulfill a Common Sense Revolution commitment to eliminate red tape barriers to jobs and investment. To date, the commission has helped repeal 45 outdated pieces of legislation and helped eliminate approximately 975 regulations towards the government's initial goal of eliminating 1,000 regulations. The commission is also leading the way within the government to prevent new red tape and regulations from hindering job creation and affecting Ontario's business climate. That's probably most important. It's great to eliminate regulations and red tape, but

more important, we must not create new regulations and new red tape to replace them.

The commission defines red tape as a government measure that negatively affects Ontario's economic competitiveness by adding unnecessary requirements, costs or delays to normal activities of business, and indeed institutions as well. Red tape is not just legislation and regulation but includes licences, permits, approvals, standards, registration, filing and certification requirements, guidelines, procedures, paperwork, and enforcement practices. Some of the more common irritants include unending voice mail or unanswered letters.

The commission is working with all ministries and agencies as part of a government-wide effort to improve customer service. "Customer service" has not been a very well-known term in government for many years. What we have to start to do is to concentrate on that customer service, because all of Ontario is indeed our customer. Whether it be the patient, the senior who may have difficulty finding out regulations and how to get things done that are most important to him, the business person, the student, they are our customers. They must know how to be able to do that. We have to remember how what we put into regulations and legislation will affect that little person who's watching us, that person who's called our customer.

Red tape does not include policy areas such as taxation rights and harmonization of taxes or privatization measures. Measures that directly protect public health and safety and environmental quality are not considered red tape.

As part of some background on this bill, in 1996 we introduced 17 bills to eliminate legislation, reform forms and fees from regulation, remove other administrative details from legislation and regulations and streamline regulatory processes to better serve Ontario. By the end of the last session of the Legislature all these bills were passed.

I often think of times that I've gone out to new businesses and cut a red ribbon. I used to suggest that it be a blue ribbon but I don't any more. I want to cut a red ribbon, because what it says is that we are helping to cut red tape to make sure that Ontario is open for business. For these companies and these businesses that are opening and have the confidence in this province, we are indeed cutting that red ribbon and cutting red tape.

Bill 25 consolidates the seven bills that died on the order paper and includes additional changes to further reduce unnecessary legislation and remove red tape. I'm delighted that the 18 ministers responsible for the contents of Bill 25 shared the views of the commission and took the time and effort to research and identify the needed legislative changes embodied in this bill. I applaud Minister Dave Tsubouchi for sponsoring this important bill. I also acknowledge the efforts of my fellow commissioners for their work with ministers and stakeholders and assistants in developing this bill. This is most important. The people who are affected by regulation and legislation today must be the ones who carefully look at it and are part of the process of creating that legislation.

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In tackling red tape problems we have listened to stakeholders and have applied some basic principles, principles that clearly identify and define the problem, including getting stakeholders to suggest possible solutions; assessing alternatives to regulation through upfront consultations with stakeholders; restricting regulatory action to instances where the benefits outweigh the risks or consequences of available alternatives or non-intervention; submitting policies, processes, legislation and regulation to ongoing or sunset reviews, and I believe sunset reviews are one of the most important things that can be included in any legislation, so that we always revisit, so that we always have the opportunity to improve or make better.

We have been assisted in our analysis by an external advisory board that represents various sectors of the economy, including the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters, chambers of commerce from all parts of Ontario and the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association. Our work has been recognized and applauded. According to Judith Andrew, executive director of provincial policy for CFIB: "The commission is a focal point for small business regulatory concerns in Ontario. We are encouraging the commission to continue challenging unnecessary red tape and paper burden."

As an advocate on behalf of the government's diverse clients, the Red Tape Commission has developed an approach based on fair and open consultations. This approach has achieved remarkable results, not only as we reviewed items that are contained in Bill 25 but also when we looked at other red tape issues.

For example, stakeholders from wineries, breweries and the you-brew industry have different opinions on how you-brew establishments should operate and this has caused problems throughout the industry. As a commission, we convinced them to work together, to design responsible regulations that they could live with. We had something like five meetings with them where it was clear that unless they got together on their own, we would end up having to decide on the legislation, and that is ridiculous. We wanted to make sure that this group, whether it was the small you-brew, the small Mr Beer, or Molson's or Labatt's, could all work well and make sure that the proposed changes to the legislation were done.

Let me emphasize that Bill 25 is responsible management. It's like spring cleaning, getting rid of the accumulation in the corridors of government over the decades, things like the Oleomargarine Act, the Abandoned Orchards Act, the Fur Farm Act and the Policy and Priorities Board of Cabinet Act, because you don't need legislation to create cabinet committees; it's redundant, hence red tape.

Bill 25 is also about removing requirements to amend regulations and Gazette changes to office hours of registry offices that take the time and resources of government and often get published weeks after the actual event.

Many of the legislative changes proposed in Bill 25 will lead to the revocation of supporting regulations.

Bill 25 will benefit businesses and consumers in this province. We've often been accused of supporting business. What we should be accused of is that we are getting involved with customer service, and we are going to make customer service, consumer service, our priority.

One of our external advisers likened government regulations and red tape to the experience of Gulliver in Lilliput. Gulliver was tied down by hundreds of strands of rope, each one of which was insignificant and easily broken by the much larger Gulliver.

Red tape is like this to business. Each strand of the process, each form, each approval is a small strand. If they add up, as they have done over the decades, they soon tie up our businesses, hinder their profitability, their competitiveness and their ability to expand and indeed to hire.

Job creation is what this is all about. With Bill 25, we are cutting many of those strands. Reducing red tape not only makes it easier for business to operate, but it can also help reduce costs for consumers and business, thereby improving the bottom line, and is that not what it's all about? If the bottom line is improved, the businesses improve, it increases spending and it creates job growth.

For example, earlier this year the Red Tape Commission worked with the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and arranged for owners of bars and restaurants to have the option of using credit cards to purchase products for LCBO outlets. Previously, they had to pay by cash or cheque.

Why would they have to do it and nobody else? Are they bad corporate citizens? I think not. Consumer and Commercial Relations Minister David Tsubouchi announced that change in February 1998. According to the tourism and hospitality industry, it will benefit over 16,000 liquor-serving establishments in Ontario with purchases of over \$300 million annually from the LCBO by providing a major improvement in their cash flow.

As further examples, the commission's work with other ministries has resulted in eliminating more than 1,000 unnecessary annual licences, permits and reports for farm and food-processing businesses, making changes to allow electronic registration of new businesses and filing of corporate income tax returns and changing the Retail Business Holidays Act to remove unnecessary unfairness for retail stores across Ontario.

But more importantly, our perseverance is paying off with steady improvements in both attitude and performance of customer service and a growing understanding in the public service that how we treat customers has a direct impact on Ontario's economic well-being.

The government has recently introduced a number of customer service standards that will help further reduce red tape, including telephone calls being answered by the third ring eight times out of 10 during working hours. Correspondence will be answered within 15 working days. Walk-in customers will be served in order and be told of an expected wait time.

Bill 25 represents one more step in our path to get rid of unnecessary red tape in Ontario. Based on hundreds of submissions and interviews with the business sector in 1997, we have made 132 recommendations for reducing red tape contained in the provincial government. To date, roughly 92 of the 132 recommendations have been or will soon be implemented and the Red Tape Commission is committed to seeing that the remaining recommendations are implemented.

The commission also reviews proposed regulatory measures to ensure, among other things, that affected businesses have been consulted. We examined the implications for job and investment by requiring ministries to compete and submit a regulatory impact and competitive test that helps the commission screen new legislation and regulatory proposals.

The commission's advice is becoming a required component of cabinet's decision-making process.

The commission's work complements the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board objectives and outlook on the future prosperity of this province. The board strongly believes that cutting red tape now is essential for growth in jobs and investment. Thanks to several private sector and public studies, the commission knows what the benefits of this work will be.

Further, a study of 500 Ontario businesses undertaken at the commission's behalf found that regulatory burdens accounted for an average of 7% of companies' operating costs. It has also found that 71% of companies surveyed said they would be most likely to invest in the province if red tape was reduced. That is why it is critical for this government to bring forward important pieces of legislation such as Bill 25 and that the Red Tape Commission continues its efforts to reduce red tape.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Seeing none, other speakers?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Mr Speaker, I am going to split my time with my colleague from Yorkview and my colleague from Parkdale.

In terms of Bill 25, just a few general comments. First of all, this bill, which is supposed to cut red tape, is one of the most detailed, complex bills we've had before us. It's about 200 pages. You need to hire about 10 Bay Street lawyers for each section of the bill. It's very complex and most difficult. Never mind for a small business person; I can imagine an ordinary consumer trying to explain how these changes affect them. I really wonder why the Red Tape Commission is so apt to pat itself on the back when it has created such a complex bill.

On top of that, as you know, the government has also passed seven property tax bills. They now have given the property taxpayers of Ontario the most complex property tax system in the world.

To give you an example of that, today I had a call from a gentleman in the city of Toronto who bought a property on a major street. On the property he bought, last year he was paying \$2,000 in taxes. He decided to be an entrepreneur and he tore down the home and put up a

commercial building to try to basically, as I said, make a little money for himself and for some investors.

It so happens that on the commercial building he put up, where he used to pay \$2,000 in property taxes, he now has to pay \$120,000 in property taxes. But worse than that is that there is another building up the street, a commercial building where they pay \$25,000 in property taxes — the same type of building. It's because of this new complex property tax system. The old building is under the cap for property taxes. His new building with its estimate for the first time isn't under the cap.

So this poor guy is estimating that he'll have to pay — he's not going to make as much money on the income as he will on paying the taxes, so he's asking: "Why did I invest in this property? How did this government ever come up with this complex tax system?"

In this Bill 25 there are a lot of complex things. In fact, the most common word in this bill is "fee." Over and over again, in this bill the Red Tape Commission has given ministers and their designated deputy ministers or designated persons the right to impose fees on the people of Ontario. There are literally hundreds of fees that are going to be imposed on the people of Ontario for years to come because of this Bill 25.

One of the things that this bill does more than anything else is impose fee after fee after fee on the people of Ontario. If you are supporting this bill, and I know the government members always do support everything that comes from the Premier's office, I hope the members realize they are supporting all these fees that are going to be thrust on the small business person and the consumers in Ontario.

Just look through the bill and you'll see, "The registrar may by order set and collect fees." Again and again, set and collect fees is the order of the day. "On payment of the required fee," if you want to examine documents; "failure to pay a fee;" "any required fee." Over and over again this bill is invoking all kinds of fees on the people of Ontario.

I hope the members opposite are voting in favour of all these increased fees and the powers by unelected people to impose fees that will not come before this Legislature and will not be debated by any committee. These fees will be automatically set arbitrarily by appointed, faceless people behind closed doors who are not accountable to anybody, not even members of this Legislature.

In fact, the bill allows new and enhanced fee-setting powers under 40 statutes so there are going to be fee-setting powers in 40 statutes as a result of this Bill 25.

There are some interesting things in this bill that are anomalies. There's one very interesting section in schedule C. In this schedule C, what they basically do is give an unelected, appointed bureaucrat the unprecedented power to make changes in legislation, basically without the consent of the Legislature. If you look at schedule C in Bill 25 there's a section that says "the chief legislative counsel may make changes that are necessary to clarify what is considered to be, in the case of a statute, the intention of the Legislature."

An appointed person, unelected, will interpret what the intention of the Legislature will be. This is unprecedented, where this unelected person is going to be able to in essence change the tone, the texture, the intent of a piece of legislation, and we will not know who this person is. It'll be the chief legislative counsel. These changes will be made without our knowing it. Certainly, the public will not know it.

Theresa McClenaghan of the Canadian Environmental Law Association thought this was so appalling that she wrote about it in the July-September issue of *Intervener*. It's volume 23. She comments about it. She says:

"Schedule C" in Bill 25 "would, if enacted, institute a process of amending statutes that would bypass the Legislature altogether by simply allowing the chief legislative counsel (a bureaucrat) to draft amendments for approval by cabinet. Incredible as it may sound, the Statute and Regulation Revision Act would give the power to an unelected official to 'clarify the intent of the Legislature' (or amend it, or misinterpret it).

"The act does not provide for these amendments to be passed, or reviewed or even considered by the Legislature. The process proposed in schedule C would apply to any statute in Ontario — education, environment, health, human rights. Anything could be amended by unelected officials and approved by cabinet."

She goes on to say that her quarrel is not with amending or getting rid of red tape; it is with reducing the democratic process, where at least you know who is making these changes to statutes. This is basically the approach, the tenor, the whole *modus operandi* of this bill: to give unelected people a great deal of power over the people of Ontario.

Schedule C is on page 14 of the bill, where you can look at it.

"1. The chief legislative counsel for the province of Ontario may prepare,

"(a) a revision of any or all of the statutes of Ontario" — any statute — "and

"(b) a revision of any or all of the regulations of Ontario." This person, unelected, will be able to amend any regulation without us knowing it.

"2.(1) In revising statutes or regulations, the chief legislative counsel may,

"(a) change the numbering or arrangement of provisions;

"(b) make changes in language...;

"(c) make changes that are necessary to clarify what is considered to be, in the case of a statute, the intention of the Legislature...."

This person will make those decisions. This unaccountable, faceless person in some backroom is going to interpret what we, the Legislature, meant to pass and what he or she thinks should be in the legislation. These are the sweeping powers that are in this Bill 25, along with the hundreds of fees that are going to be thrust on the people of Ontario by unelected people, unaccountable people, as a result of this so-called red-tape-reducing bill, which is really a Trojan Horse for all kinds of user fees and extra-

ordinary powers to unelected officials. That is what Bill 25 is all about. It's not about reducing red tape; it's primarily about giving regulatory powers, fee-setting powers and the power to change statutes to faceless, unaccountable people in the backroom of the Premier's office or wherever they may be. That's what Bill 25 also does. I wonder if the government is patting itself on the back for doing that. Is the government patting itself on the back for passing all these user fees and giving unelected persons the authority to change statutes without coming to the Legislature?

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Another interesting aspect of this bill which was brought forth by one of the deputations made to committee talks about, in essence, the contradictions of this government when it talks about red tape. There were some interesting deputations made about this government's position on the ability of people who are trying to stop smoking to obtain nicotine replacement therapy, which is the little patches and so forth. The deputants said that Ontario is the only province in Canada which doesn't allow these products to be sold over the counter. The cabinet is refusing that simple thing to be done. Subsequently, a person who is trying to quit smoking has to pay more for the therapy than for the cigarettes. Every other province allows this to happen. This bill is supposed to eliminate that. The test of this bill will be to see, when it is passed, whether the cabinet will finally come to its senses and allow these products to be sold over the counter at a much cheaper price.

As the deputants said, tobacco-related diseases — talk about saving money and saving lives — kill 12,000 Ontarians every year; one every 33 minutes. Tobacco-related diseases kill more people in the province than traffic accidents, suicide, homicide and AIDS combined. In a written report in 1996, the chief medical officer of health estimated that tobacco had cost Ontario \$18 billion since 1991; \$10 million every day.

Here is one small thing that this government can do in terms of getting people who are addicted to nicotine to purchase this product over the counter, as allowed by the Canada Health Act. Every other province does it. In Ontario you still have to get a prescription to get one of these suppressive devices that will help you stop smoking. That is real red tape which I challenge this government to eliminate and allow people to buy those products without the intervention of cabinet, which says, "You can't buy it off the shelf." You still have to pay a ransom to get products like nicotine gum and Nicoderm and the patches. These are red tape things that the people of Ontario want reduced. Let's see if that happens.

This bill over and over again tries to give the impression that this is about improving the business climate and making things simpler. I think in many cases it makes things much more complex because the person who will be the victim or the person who will be the consumer or the entrepreneur caught in the commercial wrangle of the day will find it very difficult to understand what these new regulations are. They are highly complex. To get this bill

or parts of this bill interpreted, you will need to hire a lawyer. It is most complex.

The best kinds of laws are laws that are simple, laws that are understandable, laws that are transparent. Bill 25 has page after page that I'm sure most Ontarians would never be able to understand unless they had the help of someone, because it is extremely complex. You have to keep referring to other statutes; you've got to go back and forth. The amount of time you would have to spend as an individual is really too much to ask of an ordinary person.

These red tape bills have been bogged down for two years, and no wonder. It took them two years to come up with this because of all the complexities. Ontarians won't really feel the consequences of many parts of this bill for years to come. That is why our party is not supporting this bill. There are too many fees, too many powers given to unelected people to change statutes, to impose fees on everything and to give more powers to ministers and their appointed, unelected bureaucrats

This is the government that claims to be about small government. Well, this is the government that's about big government. They've created bigger and bigger government that's constantly in the face of Ontarians, constantly disrupting the way they do business: what they've done with the business occupancy tax — they made landlords tax collectors — what they're doing with this bill. Over and over again, this government intrudes in the daily lives of Ontarians and is constantly in the face of Ontarians, constantly making things more complex, constantly causing them to hire more lawyers, more advisers because they pass so many bills trying to correct flaws in the bills they passed earlier. They are a bill-passing machine. They are addicted to passing bills.

Here's another bunch of additions they're trying to foist on the people of Ontario. I just tell the people of Ontario, beware of Bill 25. It seems innocuous, but it is an omnibus bill that gives an unprecedented amount of power to unelected people that could result in many higher fees being paid. The worst thing of all is not the fee itself but the fact that you can't challenge that fee. You automatically have to pay the fee or you don't get the service or you don't get the information. You won't have anybody to go to. You won't have any recourse, because this is a maze of fee-setting bureaucrats and the bureaucrats are rubbing their hands because nobody can get at them. They won't be accountable, they won't be questioned and they do it behind closed doors on a daily basis. They will be unfettered in their attempt to collect fees and to exercise their powers over the people of Ontario without any checks or balances.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I would like to add a few minutes to the debate as we deal with another piece of legislation that pretends to do all things for everybody.

The last member of the government to speak on the issue said this would be the ultimate thing to cut red tape and cut red ribbons. This piece of legislation in its 200 pages — and I believe, if my memory serves me well, we have had another eight pieces of different red tape bills and it's not even there yet — will not do anything to

support or improve, to ameliorate, to attract business to Ontario. Whatever they have done in here, other than perhaps a very small handful of deletions, is they have done hundreds of amendments to existing regulations or statutes, including the creation of brand-new sections and subsections with the new statutes.

What the bill really does are two particular and important things. The government has been so sharp in accumulating powers into its own hands, into the hands of the ministers and those appointed by the ministers, and into the hands of the Premier's office. The only section I could find in the act that — and I don't pretend to be a connoisseur of 200 pages of very technical material. The only thing they have really done is remove the total policy and priorities committee; they have removed that section and put it into the hands of the Premier — actually, not the Premier, not the ministers, not the deputies, not the members elected, but it's going to be the backroom boys, those well-paid people, those very expensive consultants, like those Mr Murphy imported from the United States, the far-right Republicans. That doesn't wash here, but it washes in Washington, those \$2,650-a-day consultants who will be telling the Premier, who will be ultimately telling this House what their priorities are. That's exactly what this bill will do. It will do absolutely nothing to attract new business in Ontario.

These powers and these fees incorporate some 40 new statutes, and I don't have to tell you how many other sections and subsections are included in those 40 new statutes.

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When I see something like this, the first thing I do — because it's not that I'm going to say they didn't have any more trust from us or from the people of Ontario. That's up to the people to decide and for us to know what they really do in this House, but I always jump to, what does the government change for better or worse for the people or for the government itself?

I stopped at page 25, which is sections 198 and 199. It's amazing, the similar connotation with other bills and the powers that the Premier and the minister have accumulated to themselves through other bills. This is what it says: "Subsection 54(1) of the act is amended by striking out," so it ultimately tells you that it is not deleted, it's amended. Does this mean that they have done away with certain amendments, certain laws or bylaws or decrees or statutes? No. They do amendments.

So it "is amended by striking out 'the prescribed form' in the second line and substituting 'the required form.'" Wow, big deal, they have eliminated something. But they say, "Let's clarify it. Let's put something else," and then they go on and say, "Subsection 54(4) of the act is amended by striking out 'the prescribed form' in the third line and substituting 'the required form.'" And "Section 70 of the act is amended by striking out 'a time prescribed' in the third line and substituting 'a required time.'" Do we really need thousands and thousands of dollars to say that this is a major deletion? I don't think so.

The important thing is the powers of the minister.

"73.1(1) The minister responsible for the administration of this act may make orders,

"(a) designating branch offices;

"(b) specifying business hours...;

"(d) requiring the payment of fees, other than fees mentioned in subsection 74(1), and specifying the amounts of those fees."

My colleague from Oakwood addressed himself to the powers and those fees. You might say, "Here we go again."

The other thing is this: It's not only that very subtly in fine print, if you will, they are doing what they are doing; it's also that they are doing it in such a way that they don't have to come to this House for any approval or for any legislation. They can do it strictly by regulation. Not even by the Premier, not even by the ministers, by those well-paid, those expensively paid consultants who will tell them what to change and what not to change, and then they will force it upon the people.

I know the time is really squeezing us, but let me say that these are the two most important points in this particular legislation here, Bill 25. It is the powers that the ministers and the Premier are amassing and the way they are doing it that are the two most important things. In doing so, they will be creating new fees, they will be imposing new fees at their discretion, whenever they want, without coming to the House.

We've been dealing today with the Greater Toronto Services Board. You will see in due course, in due time, the effect of this particular legislation as well. I don't have to tell you, Mr Speaker, because you, as well as other members of this House, on a regular basis, attend various committee meetings. This is the real hypocrisy of Bill 25, because what really is causing a concern and doubling red tape without eliminating anything else is the creation of new bills which continue to amend bills which were introduced yesterday and today amending tomorrow's bills. None of them brings to fruition one final piece of legislation that says, "This is the end of it." They always leave something to be introduced tomorrow that either supersedes what they have introduced before or makes amendments to whatever they introduced yesterday.

The funny thing is that when they introduce that, that stays on the books and will have to be dealt with. It's not that they are making some amendments that will sit there for eternity and not bother anybody unless something very out of the ordinary happens, and then lawyers and bureaucrats will have to get to the bottom of the case down there to find this particular law. No, they are introducing bills that affect Ontario people on a daily basis. We have seen it just recently, for example, on Bill 55, the apprenticeship bill.

My goodness, they introduced a bill with a total of nine pages. You may say maybe seven or eight if you include the cover, but let's call it nine pages. You know what? After all is said, the government side brought forward, I believe, 30 amendments. They introduced a very important bill, containing nine pages in total, but then they brought forth a total of 30 amendments which no one had a chance

to debate, to see, to comment on, to have input on. No wonder the trades are not happy.

These are some of the repercussions that we are seeing with the continuation of this type of legislation here, and these are the things I'm afraid will come to have consequences, especially when we are dealing with the other pieces of legislation prior to this one here, such as Bill 56, which is the Greater Toronto Services Board.

I have a lot to say, but time is not on our side, as I can see. I will terminate and I will hope that the government — I can see that quite a few members of the government side are in the House to listen to that and I really hope that they will be listening to those people being affected, that they will listen to the opposition and change this piece of legislation which does absolutely nothing to attract new business to Ontario or help small business in Ontario. Thank you for your time, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Seeing none, other speakers?

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Normally, I would begin my comments by indicating that I'm pleased to have the chance to speak to this bill, but I can't honestly say that about this bill tonight, so let me just say that duty dictates that I make a few comments particularly on this bill.

I see that you are leaving the chair, Mr Speaker. I was going to say that when you're the member for Fort York sitting down here, we obviously hear a little bit more from you than you are allowed to say while you're sitting in the chair. I want the government members particularly to appreciate, I say to the now occupant of the chair, the Speaker, how much of a sacrifice it has been for the member for Fort York to sit quietly in the chair in respect of that very important task that whoever sits in that chair has to do. I am sure he will try to make up for it in the remaining time we have this evening.

I want to indicate that I will be dividing my time with the member for Fort York, because we do have to at least allow him a few minutes on this important piece of legislation.

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): Just a few.

Mr Silipo: Just a few.

I just want to say that as I've been looking at some of the notes that our good research people have put together on this bill and as I've been flipping through and refreshing my memory on some parts of this bill and glancing at some others that I had not looked at, I find this piece of legislation quite a fascinating collection.

It is a bill which I am not sure it is worth making a lot of fuss over, or whether the best that can be said is that it just tidies up a bunch of things that, in various statutes, have fallen simply out of use. It has to be the bill that any great lover of bills would want to see, because it goes through umpteen numbers of bills, wipes out sections, takes out things that either are no longer relevant or are deemed to be cumbersome in the view of some, and puts powers that are now in the regulation-making bodies of Parliament and puts those into the hands of individuals such as ministers, or in other cases individual civil servants. It does those kinds of things.

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I know that the government wants to portray this bill as being very much within its initiative of cutting red tape. There are probably a couple of provisions in this bill that actually do that, that simplify the process that small businesses in particular, or businesses in general, have to go through to make various applications or to deal with various government bodies. I don't want to say that there is nothing in this bill that actually simplifies procedures and cuts red tape because I'm sure, in fact I know, that there are a couple of provisions that do that.

One of the things this bill does, and some of the other bills the government has trumpeted under the same umbrella, is move, for example, in a number of the fee-setting areas — remember the fees? Those are the ones that Mike Harris used to call "taxes by another name." Now, of course, he thinks that they're not taxes.

There has been a long-standing tradition and process in this province that usually various pieces of legislation allow for fees to be set for various services or items that require a cost, and those fees can be updated by regulation, which really means by a decision of a cabinet committee, a committee of ministers and parliamentary assistants, and eventually a rubber stamp by the cabinet of the day. That's the process, for people who are watching who may not be as familiar with the process that these things normally go through.

What the government has done through this and other similar pieces of legislation is simply taken some of those provisions and transferred those powers from the cabinet process into the hands of the individual ministers responsible. You may say: "Well, that simplifies things. Why shouldn't that be the case?" I suppose where you're setting fees for going to a museum or going to various other things or places like that, some of the tourist attractions we have in this province, you can say maybe that's the fairest way.

Sometimes there's a good reason why a history has developed in our province of having this process done through the regulation-making body, that's the cabinet process, and the particular committee that I'm assuming still exists then reports to the full cabinet in setting those fees. That is because it also allows for somebody other than the minister, or people outside the particular ministry, to look at what changes the individual ministry and the minister want to make. You know what? That is a good idea because, by having somebody outside of that particular ministry or minister look at it, you get a different and somewhat more objective view of whether the application for an increase of a fee is simply updating something and therefore makes logical sense, or whether it may be creating a problem that the ministry and the minister sometimes may not have foreseen.

I'm not sure that the government in this case is actually simplifying things. They may be in terms of who's going to be involved in making the decisions and maybe reducing the number of people that will be involved in making those decisions. Will that necessarily result in better decisions? I don't think so. It may result in faster

decisions, but making faster decisions, as the history of this government tells us, does not always mean making better decisions. In fact, if the track record of the government were to be looked at as an indicator, you would say that fast decisions have turned out more often than not to be bad decisions.

There I get into the whole issue, for example, of what this government has done with the property tax system, where the speed with which they wanted to make decisions has resulted in not one, not two, not three, not five but seven different bills having to be presented to this House, each one to rectify mistakes that were in the previous legislation. Again because of speed, because of an attitude I think of as arrogance, among other things, that this government has shown in that area and in other areas, a sense that they know best, that is what has brought us to this point where speed sometimes is and often as been shown, indeed bears out, to be the worst way to go in term of making these decisions.

To use the example of the fee-setting process, if it's something that's simple and straightforward, then taking it to a cabinet committee does not take a long time and it's worth that additional step in the process, because it then can go through quite swiftly and smoothly if there isn't a particular problem.

Other things that I notice in this legislation have to do with what I would call much less reducing red tape — in fact, one could suggest that adding a bit of red tape is more the case. Simply updating the reality of various statutes and processes to the fact that we now live in a world in which technology plays a great role — I look particularly to some of the changes made here under the Courts of Justice Act. This act would authorize the making of rules of court dealing with the issuance, filing and storage of documents by electronic means, something which I think is quite sensible, and simply bringing the process up to date; similarly with respect to the Evidence Act, which will allow for printed and electronic consolidation of the statutes and regulations published by the Queen's Printer to be relied on as being just as authoritative as the printed copies. That is more a case of updating the situation to recognize that technology now can play a greater and more important role in facilitating the flow of documents and the flow of legislation and the use of legislation. I think that is a sensible thing.

I say to my colleagues in government that they can continue to make much of this piece of legislation, such as simplifying the structures that citizens in this province, particularly people involved in business, have to deal with. There are one or two things in here that do that. But by and large, I see this more as an act that updates various things.

I continue to be perplexed as to why this bill gets rid of some things that it does; I'm not sure why it does. I find particularly fascinating schedule J, I think it is, that actually gets rid of the whole Policy and Priorities Board of Cabinet Act. I find that really interesting because I don't think that the government has abolished the policy and priorities board and I don't think it intends to. Given

what that act as I understand it does, to simply set out the number of cabinet ministers who are supposed to be on that — six, I believe — the fact that you need three of them, which is just half, for a quorum, the fact that you have to keep minutes, I'm not sure which of those three parts was particularly troubling to the government that they had to get rid of the whole legislation. Is it the fact that they had to keep minutes of decisions? If that's the case, then what does this do? I guess it will make it easier if they don't have to keep minutes, but it will also mean, even internally, that the level of accountability will be even less than it's been so far.

There's this kind of charade that we see here in this bill, as we've seen in others, a pretence that something greater is being done. What is being done on the one hand is simply updating some of the legislation, which I don't find particularly offensive on that score, but where I think there are powers removed from the regulation-making power, which is already removed enough from the legislative process, and then put them into the hands of individual ministers or, even worse, individual civil servants, then I find that particularly troublesome.

Those are some of the problems that we continue to have with this legislation. Again the overall problem is that the government continues to make far too much of this in terms of how important a piece this is. That doesn't surprise me, because this government continues to spend more energy in terms of PR and the way they spin whatever they do than they spend paying attention to what they actually do and the impact that has on people.

I could go on a little bit more on that, but I know that my colleague from Fort York wants to add a few comments on this, so I'm happy to yield the floor to him.

Mr Marchese: I'm happy to have this opportunity to add a few things. I'll be as brief as I possibly can because I know that you and many others have other things to do, including reading this document that you haven't had an opportunity to catch up with.

There's no doubt that some of the measures contained in this act will facilitate the problem of red tape for some people in our communities, but the people this document is intended to support or reach are, by and large, business. This government makes no bones about that. Each speaker tonight has said that in every which way. The member for Peterborough, the member for Simcoe Centre and the member for Hamilton West have made point after point that this is all about cutting red tape so business can get on with the job it does best. It's all about them.

As the general public listens to these members, the regular joes out there, they say: "What about me? Where do I fit into this?" That's the question I would ask. They say it's all about business. No problem with the glorification of business, as this government does, but what about the little guy? "Where do I fit in?" They don't fit into this bill. Other than paying additional fees, they got nothing. They legitimately raise the appropriate questions.

As I read this newsletter these folks have put out, there are a few quotations. I want to quote just one, to give you a flavour of the proclivities of this government: "I think a

corporate culture that encourages an attitude of facilitation versus enforcement is something that is very badly needed in almost all ministries I have dealt with." Do you see what I mean? That's what it's about. It's about facilitating the job for the business person so that he can get on with the job of making pecunia. That's what it's about.

The ordinary guy out there is saying: "I want a piece of that too. When is it my turn?" They're right, their turn will never come except through the downward trickle effect, the Conservative trickle effect that you folks love. "When we facilitate for the business sector, then people at the bottom, the regular joe down there, he's going to get the job." That is what this all about. It's about creating wealth; it's about creating more jobs. There's no certainty attached to that. It's just that Tory members say it, so naturally we believe it, because everybody understands how the corporate world creates jobs for the little guy.

Forget about unemployment. It may be high but it's not their fault; they're doing their best. If only governments could just get out of the way and cut the red tape, more jobs would be created. Speaker, you're a lawyer. You know there's no evidence put forth here that proves this; you know that. Some of the 11 members who were part of the commission know that too. There is no evidence that by cutting red tape, facilitation, the regular folk out there are going to get a break, or that in saving money through red tape, that saving accrued by the profit-making corporation will flow down to us consumers, to us regular people. There's no guarantee of that. There's no proof that anything other than generating more wealth for the corporation is what this bill is all about.

That's why it is so hard to be the Speaker, as you are, because there's so much to say, right? They box you in. I can see you there. you're boxed in, you can't say a word and I know you're desperately reaching out and saying, "Let me at him." I understand that. That's why I don't want to be the Speaker. It would curtail my ability to be critical of your government. I would never be there for more than an hour.

This is what this bill is all about. It's about facilitating, getting government out of the way, so these glorified private sector individuals can make more money. That's what it's about. It's about the environment as one issue, where you folks have determined that they don't need enforcement, that the government need not be there to enforce, which is what this guy said. He said, "A corporate culture that encourages an attitude of facilitation versus enforcement...." So you guys comply, as the good little instruments of the corporate culture you are, and get out of the way. So you say, "On matters of the environment, we don't need enforcement. You can voluntarily self-comply — voluntary self-compliance — in the environment." Speaker, how could you permit that?

You know these folks have no concerns about the pollution caused by cars or the spewing of garbage into the water we drink, thousands of chemicals in that water we drink, that remain in our bodies, that are altering our physiology. You, Speaker, and your fine friends are saying: "That's OK. They will monitor themselves and

surely, as the good corporate citizens they are, they wouldn't do anything to harm human life."

Some of these guys have the bucks to buy spring water, but not everybody can afford to buy spring water. They've got to drink the tap water that contains all those wonderful chemicals, that will alter our physiology, but that's OK, because the rich can afford to get their spring water for a mere dollar for a little bottle. If you drink the Champagne of mineral water — oh, help me, Speaker.

Interjection: Perrier.

Mr Marchese: Perrier, and the other?

Mr Sergio: San Pellegrino.

Mr Marchese: Oh, San Pellegrino is a good spring water. I've got to admit I'm tempted to buy it every now and then, and when I've got a few dollars and I can buy some San Pellegrino, it's good water. But those guys, they buy it on a regular basis. They've got no problem with a few bucks.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Are you jealous?

Mr Marchese: Jealous? I think it would be nice to be able to redistribute that fine wealth that these people make, spread it out a little bit. If it's good for them, surely it's good for rest of us, don't you think, Monsieur Hastings, from Etobicoke —

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Tilson): Member for Fort York, perhaps you could address your comments through the Chair, please.

Mr Marchese: Through you, Speaker; you know I always address my comments through the Chair. I know you want to rush me out, but I've got something to say. There are a few things I want to say.

Forget about this corporate culture. You guys are not really trying to help them out; you really are trying to help the regular joe, OK? The public understands.

By the way, the member for Oakwood says, "How can people afford to pay the bucks?" I tell you, corporations have no problem getting hold of these documents and hiring a few lawyers — no disrespect, Speaker — to go through these and find out what's in it for them, a couple of bucks to find out how much more they can make, by paying a lawyer to just breeze through these in a couple of hours. It's not a big deal. But if it was the regular joe having to find out what their rights were, that would be really a traumatic thing for them. They couldn't get through it. This is why it's business. They've got the bucks to pay the lawyers to go through this, rummage through it and find out what's in it for them.

Just a few more things before I go; I've got to say a few more things.

The member for Oakwood raised a few issues that I raised with the Chair because I know he was chatting with some of the legal folks back there, or other folks.

The member for Welland-Thorold raised this in committee and he touched on this very issue that the member for Oakwood raised; that is, schedule C, the Statute and Regulation Revision Act, which establishes what has been happening on a 10-year basis in the Legislature. In the ninth year of every decade there is a

bill before the Legislature which effectively creates what all of us call the Revised Statutes of Ontario. No problem with that. What they argue, and I don't know who argues this, whether it's the government or the civil servants, is that what we are doing through this new measure is to simply codify what already is there. But what would happen is that these Revised Statutes of Ontario will never appear in the Legislature again. That might be useful to some, but some of us believe, democratically, that whatever changes are made by the legislative people, with all due respect, never have to be supervised by us, debated by us or debated by anybody who has a public interest, on the assumption that what they do in terms of their revisions is merely a matter of perhaps correcting a comma here or a sentence there or unassuming language changes or something that might be redundant or possibly some legislation that might be obsolete and appears harmless. Surely they would not be allowed or would not permit themselves to be politicized by any government of the day, do something that they would not do otherwise. I don't doubt that for a moment.

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The problem is that this change relinquishes legislative authority to the civil service, and that's what's wrong with that change. It's not because I mistrust them, not because I don't think they're capable. That is not the issue. The point is that whatever changes appear in front of this Legislature in the ninth year to deal with these Revised Statutes of Ontario are before us, and it permits me, and other members, to comment on them, should I wish to comment. That, in my view, is the support I give to keeping the current procedure as we have it and speaking against this particular change and suggesting to you that it's a serious mistake.

I know some of you have not read it. I know most of you haven't read it. Frankly, I hadn't picked up on this until my good buddy from Welland-Thorold raised it with me. Having done so and having read it, I realized that this is a serious problem. There is no recourse, there is no appeal. What they do and what they say is final. It may not be a problem, but even if it were not a problem, I argue, why change the process we have established over the years under all governments? Why change the process? To what extent is this a reduction of red tape? I don't understand that.

I wanted to raise this as an issue and suggest to you that if you look at it you may agree with us that from a democratic point of view of supervision, of observing, of commenting on any matter of this measure, as simple as it might be, it is not something you want to abdicate. You want to keep control.

I know the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale perhaps is puzzled by what we're raising here, but it's in the act, and he might want to look at it, may urge the cabinet ministers and others to look at it as well, I'm not sure. It's a small matter.

Another matter I wanted to raise is that the government introduced Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. A couple of weeks

ago we debated this. I remember speaking to this bill. I recall the members of this House saying: "Oh, it's an antiquated bill. We haven't seen changes to this bill in 30 or 35 years. It's time we changed it. There are redundancies. There's duplication. There is money to be saved if we update it."

I just found out that in committee some changes have been made, and there's a new title now, An Act respecting Apprenticeship and Certification. What I understand from this or glean from others in terms of what's happening is that what you said needed to be changed because it was old, archaic and was costing the whole province a lot of money is now going to be kept, at least parts of it are going to be maintained, and other changes are going to be made.

But if you argued that it was antiquated and needed changes in order to make savings and efficiencies, why now do we deal with keeping the old bill, the old measures that you didn't like, with new proposed measures that introduce others with the old?

But it is symptomatic of the incompetence of what you folks are doing. You introduce bills, and because you haven't spent the time to reflect adequately, like most of the bills you have introduced, you get into trouble and then you've got to change and then you've got to compromise, and you look not very competent when you do that.

Speaker, there's so much more that one could comment on about this bill, but I, under duress, give in to the others and give up, except to remind the folks that this is a bill for business, not a bill for the ordinary guy. This is a bill where the ordinary guy is going to face fees and business will make some money, and I tell you it won't trickle down. But that's OK because you folks are the fine instruments of big business anyway.

We'll just leave it at that and hope that the general public will learn a few things as we go along. Hopefully, they won't want to re-elect you, but God bless, who knows?

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate? Seeing none, Mrs Ecker has moved third reading of Bill 25.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
All those in favour, say "aye."
All those opposed?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio):
Mr Speaker, I believe there's unanimous consent for five members to be deemed to be standing to cause a recorded vote and for the recorded vote to be deferred until Monday, November 30, at deferred votes.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed. The motion is deferred until Monday.

Orders of the day.
Hon Mr Turnbull: Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The House is adjourned until 1:30 on Monday.

The House adjourned at 2027.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

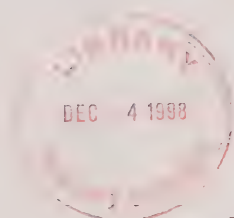
Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 30 November 1998

Lundi 30 novembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 November 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 novembre 1998

The House met at 1333.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): "We want to breathe clean air." That's the rallying cry of the Sudbury Committee for Clean Air. The co-founders of this committee, Marie France Daoudi and Primo Steffan, want the government to act, and they want the government to act immediately. They and the rest of the citizens of the regional municipality of Sudbury who signed this petition are tired of the quality of air that they're breathing, and they want that to change. They want the industry and the ministry to come together and establish a proper set of criteria for SO₂ emissions in the regional municipality of Sudbury. For too long there has been an acceptance on the part of this ministry of unfair amounts of tolerance with regard to sulphur dioxide emissions from Inco and Falconbridge. That must change now.

This committee and the residents who signed the petition understand that the cuts to the Ministry of the Environment have negatively affected the regional municipality residents, and they want that changed immediately. They also want strict government guidelines. They want those in place immediately. The funny thing is, they have industry co-operation. What they need is a Minister of the Environment who will act to protect the quality of Sudbury air.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Last Thursday I was honoured to attend a hastily called meeting sponsored by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee in London, Ontario. My colleagues Dwight Duncan from the Liberal Party and Bob Wood from the Tory party were with me to hear the disgust, disappointment and distrust expressed by the disabled community in London towards this government, and the betrayal they felt at the introduction of Bill 83, which incidentally they refuse to call an Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

I'd like to read into the record a letter sent on November 24 to Premier Harris from David Lepofsky on behalf

of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee. I'll read one paragraph of that.

"We cannot accept your bill as in any way fulfilling your election promise to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act to achieve a barrier-free Ontario for people with disabilities. Your bill will do nothing to redress the barriers we face. It does not even speak to the vast majority of barriers that we face, namely, those outside the Ontario government. Of those that it does address, namely, those within the Ontario government, it leaves their removal and prevention to the sole discretion of each ministry. It is unenforceable, provides no remedies, and is, with respect, a hurtful insult to the one-and-a-half million Ontarians who now have a disability. It fails to comply with any of the 11 principles which the Ontario Legislature unanimously adopted for this bill on October 29, 1998."

HURRICANE RELIEF

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate the men and women of CFB Trenton. Since mid-October these constituents of mine have been working tirelessly to coordinate and deliver Canada's aid to the victims of Hurricane Mitch in Central America.

During the initial phase of the operation there were five C-130 flights per day. These flights deployed the DART teams, who immediately began the process of setting up water purification systems. Tests revealed local tap water to contain 10 times the fecal content that would close an Ontario beach. In all, more than 50 flights left my riding of Quinte during the first 10 days of the relief effort.

The base has now moved into the sustainment phase of the relief operation. One Airbus leaves the base every day containing food and medical supplies.

At its peak, 1,000 people were involved in the air lifts, with many more in support roles. This continues to be an enormous operation, with the two air squadrons on the base dedicated to this mission 24 hours per day.

I want to thank the members of squadrons 429, 436, 437, 424 and 426 for the excellent job they have done to deliver hurricane aid. I would also like to congratulate the chief government whip for the fine work he has done to coordinate Ontario's relief effort.

VICTORIAN ORDER OF NURSES

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Today we had a very sad announcement, that the VON has can-

celled yet another area of home nursing, in Lanark. This is the third area in Ontario that has made the decision to stop delivering nurses' services in those regions.

What is so sad about it is that if we look at the Common Sense Revolution, nowhere in those flimsy pages did it say that the VON would be forced out of nursing services because of the Conservative Mike Harris government, but that is what's happening out there in the field. If we ask patients who are waiting for that blue car to arrive up the driveway to take care of their patient needs, they don't care who sends the nurse there, they just know that's their VON nurse.

What we know this government has done is put in a competitive bidding process that is slanted in favour of private companies, and these companies are taking the business away from the VON, the VON that for over 100 years has delivered this service. Unfortunately, Lanark is but the third. How many more are going to fall because of this government's policies that favour private business?

All we can say is that we hope, before it's too late, the Conservatives will hear from people who say, "We want VON in the nursing business," and not slant policies against the VON.

1340

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY AGENDA

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I want to take a few moments here to speak about why I've chosen to become a New Democrat and why I will be supporting the NDP platform in the upcoming provincial election. Last week, there were unfortunately some wild and inappropriate comments about my decision to join Howard Hampton and the NDP caucus and I think the record should be set straight.

You will remember that last year the major issue in my by-election in Ottawa West was health care. People in Ottawa West were upset with the Harris agenda to close hospitals, particularly closing the Grace and Riverside hospitals, downsizing the Ottawa Civic, the Elisabeth Bruyère and the Montfort. I asked, going door to door, if the Harris cuts to health care, education and social services were worth the price of the Harris income tax scheme, and people said no by an overwhelming majority. It is a fact that the Harris income tax scheme is costing the Ontario treasury \$5 billion a year, is the reason why we're in a deficit today and why hospitals and schools are being closed by the Harris government.

Howard Hampton and the NDP have a plan to solve the crisis in health care and education that Mike Harris has created. They have listened to the public and have developed well-thought-out policies to meet the needs of Ontarians. We will finance it, in a balanced budget context, through rolling back for those individuals with taxable incomes of \$80,000 or more the Harris income tax break. This will affect only the top 6% of income earners in Ontario, people with taxable incomes of \$80,000 or more, and will provide the money that we need, \$1.5 billion, to

meet health care and education needs in our community. It's a sensible plan and I'm pleased to support it.

IMPERIAL OIL-ESSO REFINERY

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): This year, our local Imperial Oil-Esso refinery celebrated 20 years of operation at Nanticoke. My wife and I had the opportunity to attend their family open house and tour the facility this September.

Built by Texaco in 1978 and purchased by Imperial Oil in 1989, the refinery is a major employer in Norfolk: 240 full-time jobs and 60 regular maintenance contract workers as well. The refinery is located on over 1,500 acres of land and can convert 112,000 barrels of crude oil a day into a range of petroleum products, things like motor oil, aviation fuel and asphalt. This means that six billion litres of crude oil are refined annually. Products are distributed throughout Ontario and the northern United States by pipeline, truck, boat and rail.

During the 1990s, more than \$100 million has been invested in sulphur removal and recovery units, an electric power generation facility, asphalt production facilities and a new hydrofiner unit to produce low-sulphur diesel fuel.

A commitment to safety has been made at Imperial Oil, celebrating six months of operation without recording a single employee lost-time injury throughout the whole corporation. Credit for much of this achievement is given to employees' attitudes towards their own and their co-workers' safety.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Tomorrow marks the one-year anniversary of the passage of Bill 160, a black day for education in Ontario. Bill 160 was rammed through this Legislature despite the protests of tens of thousands of teachers, parents and students right across Ontario. It was rammed through for one reason only: because the Mike Harris government needed to take control of education funding so that they could make the cuts they needed to pay for their tax cut. One year later, we have seen only too clearly that the Mike Harris cuts are hurting kids in the classroom and are disastrous for publicly funded education.

The Harris government will say they backed off the \$700 million in further cuts that they intended to make — not because they care about education but because the public clearly would not tolerate any more cuts, and the public made that apparent last November.

But what the Mike Harris government doesn't say is that their so-called stable funding has to pay for the cost of educating 85,000 more students than were in the education system one year ago. The Harris government doesn't say that, but they know it. That's why they stripped maintenance funding and put some 600 schools across the province at risk of closure. They didn't care what happened to the students in those schools. They actually wanted the schools closed by September 1 of this year.

Once again, only province-wide protests stopped the immediacy of this disaster. Over and over again, only protests have slowed this government's destruction, slowed it but not stopped it. It is time to turn the protests into effective action to replace a government that doesn't care about education.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): As has already been noted, tomorrow marks the anniversary of the passage of Bill 160. I just want to remind members of the government that what they unleashed, what they thought they were doing when they passed Bill 160, was to take complete control of the education agenda and drive those decisions board by board.

What they have found instead is that school board by school board and school by school, parents have understood what the Harris agenda with regard to education is all about. It's about having less money in each school for the teachers to be available to do more with that less money, and it has led to the possible closure of hundreds of schools across the province and, in my own west-end community, of some 22 schools originally on the list threatened with closure.

What I want to bring to the government members' attention particularly is that tomorrow, parents who have not given up the fight — because even though the immediate threat of closure for some schools has disappeared, they know that the threat is there, and they know that just as easily, if the Mike Harris government is re-elected, the funding formula can again be changed and all those schools could be back on the danger list. They want to lobby MPPs of all parties to remind them of the value of education and the importance of putting money back into the system.

I want to say to the government members particularly that I hope they have the courage tomorrow to make themselves available here, or throughout the week, those members who will be here and not in their ridings, to hear directly from these parents why our schools need to continue to function to provide the quality of education —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. The member's time has expired.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS TRAINING

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I would like to inform the House of the official opening of the Telecommunications Learning Institute on November 4, 1998. Located in Etobicoke-Rexdale, a working group composed of members from the sectors of industry, government and academia, and led by Humber College, was assembled to address the lack of available training for the telecommunications/convergence sector, affecting some 350,000 workers in this most vital Canadian industry.

The demand for this training is overwhelming. As technologies continue to evolve, the demand for training will continue to increase. A world-class facility, TLI's main goal is to populate the sector with people whose training enables them to fulfill the demand of the workplace.

TLI has developed learning solutions for companies and individuals who work in them. It offers a highly effective, technologically based, needs-assessment tool which will help clients to identify critical training requirements and to respond with specific action plans.

TLI's vision is "to leverage Canada's acknowledged leadership in telecommunications and be globally recognized as the pre-eminent telecommunications learning resource."

Not only does TLI constantly monitor the market to identify emerging trends and training needs, but it offers telecommunications professionals sector-wide certification and accreditation.

I am confident that TLI will have a very successful future.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 48, An Act to Improve Court Services for Families by Facilitating Expansion of the Family Court and to make other amendments to the Courts of Justice Act / *Projet de loi 48, Loi visant à améliorer les services fournis aux familles par les tribunaux en facilitant l'expansion de la Cour de la famille et apportant d'autres modifications à la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on November 30 and on December 1, 2 and 3, 1998, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 95(d), Ms Churley and Ms Lankin exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

DEFERRED VOTES

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 25, An Act to reduce red tape by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts / Projet de loi 25, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives en modifiant ou abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1355.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Harnick, Charles	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Baird, John R.	Hodgson, Chris	Ross, Lillian
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Bassett, Isabel	Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Boushy, Dave	Kells, Morley	Skarica, Toni
Carr, Gary	Klees, Frank	Smith, Bruce
Clement, Tony	Leach, Al	Snobelen, John
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Spina, Joseph
Danford, Harry	Maves, Bart	Sterling, Norman W.
Doyle, Ed	Munro, Julia	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Murdoch, Bill	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Mushinski, Mariilyn	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Newman, Dan	Vankoughnet, Bill
Fisher, Barbara	O'Toole, John	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Palladini, Al	Wilson, Jim
Fox, Gary	Parker, John L.	Wood, Bob
Froese, Tom	Pettit, Trevor	
Grimmett, Bill	Preston, Peter	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Morin, Gilles E.
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard
Boyd, Marion	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kormos, Peter	Pouliot, Gilles
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Lankin, Frances	Ramsay, David
Castrilli, Annamarie	Lessard, Wayne	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Mariilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	Silipo, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	McGuinty, Dalton	Wildman, Bud
Cullen, Alex	McLeod, Lyn	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 55; the nays are 32.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the minister responsible for children's issues. Yesterday the Golden task force produced some very disturbing information insofar as Ontario children are concerned. Anne Golden tells us that after you cut welfare, there was a 60% increase in the number of applications for subsidized housing in Toronto. Today, of 100,000 people waiting for subsidized housing in Toronto, 31,000 are children. That's 31,000 kids whose parents are spending way more than they can afford on rent and, consequently, spending way less than they should on food, on clothing and on other items that are essential for the healthy development of children.

Why is it that you can find \$47 million for political advertising but you can't help these 31,000 children growing up in poverty right here in Toronto?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): This question is being referred to the minister responsible for social housing, the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): We agree with the honourable members that any time a family or a parent, a mother with her children, find themselves in a homeless circumstance, that is indeed a tragedy. That is why we have taken many of the steps we have taken. For example, we are giving women who are on welfare the supports that will allow them to get off welfare and into paid jobs. We're very pleased to report that over 138,000 fewer children are having to depend on welfare in this province. That's certainly good news for those families and those children.

I'd like to also point out that we have made significant reinvestments to help women who are fleeing abusive situations, to try to make sure that they get the priority they need, that they get the money that is owed them from the deadbeat parent so that they don't have to rely on housing or welfare.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, your Premier said the tax cut was going to help Ontario's poor. Your economic policies were going to help our children growing up at risk. Anne Golden tells us that homelessness in Toronto has increased a staggering 123% on your watch among families with children. Your policies are condemning more of our kids to more poverty. More of them are going to school hungry, more of them are having problems at school, more of them are going to drop out of school and more of them are going

to end up on social assistance again, condemning them to a lifetime of poverty and desperation.

Why don't you admit now that your policies, your economic policies in particular, have failed Ontario's children? You are making their personal circumstances worse.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate that the honourable member is concerned about this issue, as we all are, but to make rash judgments and statements based on those statistics is inaccurate because, as he knows, many thousands of individuals who are on that waiting list are already in subsidized housing waiting to transfer to another kind of subsidized housing. I really think it's unfair to use it in that fashion.

Secondly, as the honourable member well knows, there have been significant increases in those waiting lists under previous governments' administration. The point here is, what is the best strategy for getting people off the welfare rolls and out of the need for supportive housing? Our employment programs are indeed helping sole-support parents to do that. Our programs make sure that women who are owed money from fathers who are not paying, for example, get priority in the courts, priority in housing, and indeed get more money in their hands so they don't need to rely on welfare for their children.

Mr McGuinty: I'm talking about Ontario children. On your watch, there has been a 123% increase in the number of families who are homeless and looking for subsidized housing. That has happened on your watch. That information comes from Anne Golden, a reputable, highly reliable authority on matters of this type.

You cannot slough this off. Don't talk to me about people in general; I'm talking about Ontario children who are worse off today as a result of your economic policies. I'd hope that the minister responsible for children would look into this and speak to this issue. Some 31,000 Ontario children are growing up in poverty in Toronto, here, today, now. Your policies have caused this. What are you going to do about this? Why is it that you can find \$47 million for political advertising but you can't find any money for these 31,000 children who are in need today?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member is refusing to acknowledge the success of many of the reforms this government has instituted. For example, as I said, there are fewer children, 138,000 fewer children, on welfare today. Perhaps he likes the record of his previous government when the number of children and people on welfare went up, even in good economic times.

More parents are in the workforce. We know that children are not well off on welfare, we know they don't do well, their families don't do well on welfare. They do better when they're into those jobs. That is the goal. Not only that, but when a parent can make the transition into that job, there is support through the national child benefit for that parent, there is support through the child care working supplement from this government. That means more money in the hands of that parent, mum or dad with kids, which helps them do better.

LANDS FOR LIFE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Your Lands for Life exercise has become the subject of much discussion during the past few days. You will understand that what you are attempting to do there is something that is massive and highly ambitious. You're talking about something that is going to have profound implications for the economy, the northern Ontario economy in particular. It's going to affect the right not only of this generation but of generations yet to come to enjoy lands in their natural state. Virtually everybody who has had an opportunity to look at this is asking for more time. There's an artificial deadline of today: 30 days to comment on this exercise and the recommendations produced. People are asking for an extension.

Given the scope and the breadth and the depth of this undertaking, Minister, do you not agree that this deadline ought to be extended to make sure we have all the input necessary to get it right?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member opposite for the question today on Lands for Life. I think it's the first time we've heard a question on this process from his party.

As the member might know, this has been a very extensive public consultation process. In fact, for over 16 months we have had round table meetings across Ontario. They've had some 95 public meetings, some 15,000 people have attended Lands for Life sessions over the course of their considerations, and 770 people made presentations over that course of time. I believe the member opposite will recognize this as the largest, broadest public consultation on the use of public lands in the history of Ontario.

I was pleased to receive the consolidated report of the round table chairs and to make that report public. We are now going to examine the comments that we heard over the last month and make some determinations about what the future of that process will be.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, we're talking about an exercise here that's going to affect 46 million hectares of Ontario's public lands. That's more than half of Ontario's land base. You say that you are satisfied with the 16-month process. When BC undertook their process, they took four years. The last time we did something here in this province similar to this undertaking, we took 10 years. You tell us that 16 months is satisfactory; I'm telling you it's not nearly sufficient.

There is an artificial deadline that expires today. You established that. You said 30 days were adequate for the general public to comment on these recommendations. Thousands and thousands of Ontarians are coming to learn of this exercise just recently. They want an opportunity to provide their input.

Interjection: Where have you been? Everybody knows about this.

Mr McGuinty: What have you got to lose now, Minister? What have you got to lose by extending the deadline

to allow more ordinary Ontarians an opportunity to give their input?

Hon Mr Snobelen: In answer to the member opposite, I think if the Leader of the Opposition were better informed about the kind of opinions that have been voiced to the round tables and had a chance to look at the recommendations of the round tables on public land use, he would know that there have been voices calling for an extended consultation even beyond the two extensions we've allowed for this process so that we'd have more public input. He would know there are also voices calling for certainty so that this process can in fact end in good policy for the protection of those public lands. I think the balance between those two opinions is where we seek to be.

I can tell the member opposite this: We'll be looking at the submissions that have been made over the last month that result from the consolidated reports of the round tables, that come from the 16 months of public consultation, that come from the hundreds of presentations that have been made to our round table chairs and the 15,000 people who have attended those meetings, and we will give those public opinions that come in over this month very weighty consideration.

1410

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you know that virtually every participant in the process is calling for more time to respond, whether we're talking about environmentalists, northerners, native leaders, the Environmental Commissioner, tourist outfitters and the forest industry itself.

One of the members opposite says: "Where have you been? Everybody knows about this." I know that we've been spending a lot of money on advertising in Ontario but I haven't seen anything on our television that tells us about this undertaking and what it's going to mean to future generations.

What have you got to fear? Why are you so afraid to extend the deadline to give ordinary Ontarians a greater opportunity to provide their say on what should happen to one half of the province? It's going to affect northern Ontario's economy and it's going to affect our collective right to preserve our natural lands for generations yet to come. Again, what have you got to lose by extending the deadline to ensure ordinary Ontarians have an opportunity to have their say?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, in answer to the Leader of the Opposition, I can tell the honourable member this: The Lands for Life process involved a lot of advertising by the Lands for Life process itself, by the round tables that let people know what was going on, where they were having public meetings, some 95 public meetings.

They also have widely distributed their considerations and some of the detailed information that they considered this public land use process from, some of the details provided by the Ministry of Natural Resources to those round tables. We have put the consolidated report on our Web site, where thousands of people can access this report and make comments on it, and we have received thousands of comments from people across Ontario on that report.

Unlike the member opposite, I am not going to prejudge public opinion, I am not going to prejudge the response we have to these round table reports. I will look at the responses and I can tell you that we'll give them great consideration, great weight, and we will design the future of this process.

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the minister responsible for women's issues. For the second time in less than a week your government has received damning criticism about its record on women and violence. Today, women from shelters across this province came to Queen's Park to mark the end of Wife Assault Prevention Month. They released a report that tells a story that you, Minister, your Premier and your government should be deeply ashamed of.

More women and children are asking for shelter services today than before your government started its vicious cuts, but shelters cannot meet that demand because you've cut the heart out of the programs and services that help women and children find their way out of abusive situations. Shelters are having to say to desperate women, "We don't know how we can help you," and it's on your head, Minister. How many more women have to die? I'm asking you, will you commit today to give back the money you took away from emergency shelters and second-stage housing?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): Everyone in this Legislative Assembly understands that violence against women is a serious crime and it will not be tolerated in Ontario. I will also say to the member who asks this question that here in Ontario, when I first became the minister, we asked what the recommendations of the community should be and we acted on those recommendations by producing a framework to stop the violence against women.

The shelter movement told us that one of their priorities, and a very important priority to them, was stable funding, which in fact they received. In the meantime, yes, they did have a reduction of some 5%, but you should know that on their base that would be approximately, on average, about half a staff person, maybe one staff person. We hope that with the stable funding they can go ahead and plan.

Violence against women is a crime. It won't be tolerated. We are proud of our record in the new services we have provided across nine ministries in helping to fight this violence against women.

Ms Churley: Minister, I hope you don't call cutting the services at shelters for women and children who have suffered violence "stable funding." The fact is that you have cut funding for shelters and second-stage housing across this province. You have made devastating cuts, and you won't accept that.

If you cared, women wouldn't be returning to their abusers because they have no place to go. If you cared,

you wouldn't be spending more money selling your government propaganda than you spend on all 98 shelters. A single woman fleeing domestic violence can expect to get a maximum of \$520 per month on social assistance, which is what your Andersen consultants got paid for one hour of work. This is shameful, Minister. Meanwhile, your pals down on Bay Street making \$200,000 a year are getting back \$583 a month from your tax scheme.

Minister, when are you going to start standing up for women? How many more women and children have to suffer?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I think that question would be appropriately referred to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I appreciate the honourable member's concern about this issue, but I would like to correct her. A woman with children gets more than that amount on social assistance here in Ontario and, frankly, we have some of the most generous social assistance benefits in the country, as we should have, and I think most Ontarians support that.

The goal of our reforms is to make sure we are preventing that violence, that we are giving women the tools they need to fight back, to get the money they need, to get people in jail, if that's what it takes to stop that abuse. They've got more money through the legal aid plan; they've got more priority in the courts. We've increased the prosecution success rate for people who are abusing their children and their spouses. There are a number of things this government is doing to try to help those women, to prevent those issues, to give them more tools and to get them linked up with the economic supports they need so they can be independent and self-sufficient and not have to depend on the social assistance system. They certainly don't want to be there.

Ms Churley: Minister, you know less about what your government is doing to women who are victims of violence than the minister responsible for women's issues. The United Way says three to four women are murdered by their intimate partners each month in this province. Women are fleeing violence and then finding that there's nowhere for them to go, no way for them to survive. They can't find a safe place because there isn't room for them in the shelters. When they get to a shelter, they are there for months and even years because they can't find adequate housing.

Minister, I want to know what kind of choice you think they have. They have to choose between feeding their kids or paying rent. The tool you've given them is a hammer to hit them over the head. They have no choice at all. Your government is punishing women for leaving their abusers. Their punishment is hunger, poverty and homelessness. Speak up for women and children and force your Premier and cabinet to provide affordable housing again in this province for these women and children.

Hon Mrs Ecker: One of the alarming statistics has been for quite some time the number of women who return to an abusive relationship. I understand the Stats Canada

study that was done under the NDP government had indicated it could be as high as three quarters of those individuals were going back. That's why I think, as she acknowledges, we have to have improved and better supports and services for those women, so they do have choices.

We have more subsidized housing units in this province than Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia combined. Women who are fleeing abusive relationships get the priority for going into those housing units, as they should. We've also increased the ability for those women to take steps in the courts, through legal aid and other supports, to make sure that if it's restraining orders they need, or other things, they get the support for that.

The other point is that they are getting more money —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Ecker: — from deadbeat parents. There are many things we have done to try to assist these women. We remain committed to continuing to do that and continuing to improve those services, because it is a very important —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, third party.

1420

SHELTER ALLOWANCES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Housing. Yesterday, Anne Golden said 31,000 children in Toronto alone are waiting for subsidized housing. Those children are in danger of becoming homeless. Over 1,600 children are already homeless. You crow about keeping your promises, but one promise you didn't keep is on page 13 of the Common Sense Revolution, where you promise "a shelter subsidy program for all Ontarians who need help in affording a decent level of shelter."

Minister, you kept your promise to implement your phony tax scheme for the wealthy, you kept your promise to slam the door on affordable housing, and you kept your promise to whack the poorest people in the province with a 21% cut in social assistance. Will you keep your promise this term and fund the shelter allowance program for the 31,000 children and all other Ontarians who need it?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for the question. The one thing I will agree with the member on is that to have a shelter subsidy for individuals would be a whole lot better than continuing with the housing boondoggle that was in place when you were in office.

Everyone will agree that to have one person homeless in a land that is as rich as Canada is a disaster, but I would also like to point out that during the NDP's reign from 1990 through 1993 the increase was 23,000, which is a higher rate than it is today for MTHA. The rate was increasing faster during your reign than it is at the present time, so don't be talking about something that's happened in the last year that has created a disaster. This is an unfortunate situation that has been with us for a long time, an unfortunate situation that we intend to work with all

levels of government who have a role to play in this — the federal, the provincial and the —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Marchese: Minister, enough pettifoggery from you. We have been urging you to build housing for the last couple of years. You have been saying you don't believe in government funding for housing, and you pulled the government completely out of housing. That's what you have done. We have joined the city of Toronto, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and many other social agencies who have declared homelessness a national disaster. You seem to agree with that, you stated it right now, yet you do nothing. You don't want to build housing and you don't want to keep your promise to introduce shelter allowances to help them.

Minister, if you won't build housing for the homeless, will you at least keep the promise that you have made — not that I have made but that you have made — and announce shelter allowances for all the people, children and families, who need them? Will you keep your promise?

Hon Mr Leach: I think it would be a whole lot easier for any government, regardless of political stripe, to do something about housing if we weren't carrying \$9 billion worth of debt on \$4 billion worth of assets. If I had that \$5 billion, we could do a whole lot.

The responsibility for housing obviously rests with all three levels of government — the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal governments. I have been in touch with my federal counterpart. We are planning to get together to discuss this issue and to develop some strategies for a national housing program. I know the Liberal federal government is anxious to do that. They have proposed, as you know, to mitigate down the federal responsibilities for housing to the provincial government. We believe the level of government best able to administer social housing is the municipal government, but there isn't any doubt that all three levels of government have to be involved.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I want to caution the members for Fort York, Lake Nipigon and Ottawa West. Come to order, please. I want to hear the answer the minister gives. That means you don't heckle.

Final supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Minister, you and your colleague ministers are fond of saying that we selectively ignore some of the facts over here, but you're not responding to some of the real facts, and those real facts have faces. Those are kids' faces.

I want you to listen carefully to just three sets of numbers, please, and think about them. While homelessness in Toronto has increased by 55%, there has been a 123% increase in the number of families with children who are homeless in this city. Since you cut welfare by more than 21%, the number of applications for subsidized housing has increased 60%. You may think that's a coincidence, and if you do, I'd say get a reality check. Perhaps the most startling is that every night in this city, among those who

are sleeping in shelters, 45% now are children. That is 2,000 little toddlers and children sleeping in shelters.

Your tax cut is being borne by those kids. Why don't you do something even now, on an emergency basis, to make sure those 2,000 kids don't go to sleep every night in a shelter?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Leach: My colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services makes a good point, that the money is on the table for the municipalities that are responsible for delivering that program, that the province of Ontario will stand there and pay 80%.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister?

Hon Mr Leach: I think it was pointed out that it was Anne Golden who produced the report and the statistics we're talking about this afternoon. She very clearly stated that no one level of government should accept total responsibility for the situation we have now, and that all three levels —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Leach: As I pointed out, there are discussions going on now, beginning between the municipal governments, particularly the city of Toronto, the federal government and ourselves, to sit down and deal with the report and the situation that has been brought up by Golden and by Jack Carroll, with our own statistics.

I would like to point out that the homeless and abused spouses get first priority for any housing. They go right to the top, first in the line. I'd also like to point out that the waiting list was increasing at a faster rate while you were in power than it is at the present time.

1430

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Last week our leader, Dalton McGuinty, asked for your government's response to the report of the United Way of Greater Toronto, Freedom from Violence. This report makes it statistically clear that women who are abused are at greater risk than ever because of your government's cuts to programs and services. One specific finding is that 66% of Ontario shelters reported that women were returning to or remaining in a situation with an abusive partner because they could no longer afford to leave.

Incredibly, you said last week that although you had this damning report in your hands, you had not read it. Have you now read the report and will you now acknowledge what this report makes so clear, that your government cuts have put women in abusive situations at risk?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I have read the report. I will not accept that. I will accept the responsibility, however, for establishing with other members in this Legislative Assembly and the community of Ontario the first framework across nine ministries to stop the violence against women.

I do not accept the recommendations in this report. I will be discussing them with Anne Golden tomorrow and I look forward to that discussion.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, you waited months to set up a committee to look at the recommendations from an inquest which said that women and indeed their children are at risk. You have taken no specific action to address any of the concerns that have been raised over the last year.

The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses is here today to back up the same concerns that were raised last week by the United Way. They also make it absolutely clear that women who are abused are at greater risk because of your government's cuts to shelters, to housing, to counselling and to legal aid.

As Eileen Morrow said, "In Ontario today, if you leave an abuser, you will be punished," yet your government's advertising budget continues to grow and to exceed, after 18 months, the entire annual budget for women's shelters in this province. Minister, let me ask you again, as my leader asked you last week, why have you determined that it is a greater priority to spend money on a political advertising campaign than it is to protect the welfare and safety of women and children?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Obviously we continue to be very proud of the gains we've made in Ontario. There isn't a day that goes by that there isn't some program that is working with our ministry to make things better.

I will not accept this statement that we have cut programs to women and children. I will accept the fact that there is some good information in those reports. We will look at those reports, but there is a lot of information in those reports that is simply missing.

For instance, in today's report — I can't see the page, but I have looked at it — I will tell you that it talked about what the Liberal government did; it talked about what the NDP government did; it talked about the few reductions in very focused areas that were made in this area, some four small programs; it talked about the \$27 million. But it does not get into the detail of expanding the victim/witness assistance programs that you started, of introducing the programs in hospitals, of starting these programs in our hospitals so we can get —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Minister, you say that your new Ontarians with Disabilities Act will require the government to review more than 600 pieces of legislation, as well as policies and programs, to ensure that people with disabilities are being treated properly. I wonder if the minister is aware of money being taken away from the children of disabled parents by your government. When the federal government implemented the national child benefit, your government deducted \$50 per child from welfare benefits. But that money is not just being deducted from welfare recipients;

it's also being deducted from families who depend on the Ontario disability support program.

That national benefit was supposed to help children in low-income families and it was supposed to help parents in low-wage jobs. Many of the parents receiving disability support will never be able to work. Their children need those benefits. I'd like you to tell us what kind of teeth your new legislation will have. Will your legislation mean an end to the clawing back of the national child benefit from disabled parents and their children by the Mike Harris government?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I'll refer that to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I think the honourable member's research is usually quite good and I think she probably understands that the goal of the national child benefit, the increase in money that Ottawa has given the provinces, is designed to go to families who are in low-income working situations. It's to be a top-up and an assistance to people who are in working circumstances. Any additional monies for the provinces are being reinvested in high-priority programs to help individuals who may well be in working circumstances and to help get people off welfare into those working circumstances. For example, we're using the national child benefit monies to help put actual hard dollars into the pockets of low-income working parents to help them with their child care expenses.

Ms Lankin: This is a further betrayal of persons with disabilities, and you won't even answer the question and defend your own legislation. To the minister who stands up and defends this: This money you're clawing back from parents who are receiving disability support programs, many of them are parents who will never be able to work. That national child benefit was supposed to help low-income children. It's supposed to help bring children out of poverty.

Hon Mrs Ecker: By getting them off assistance.

Ms Lankin: You're yelling at me that you want to take people off the system. These are people with disabilities. You said you were taking them off welfare. You said this was a different program. You're applying the same rules, and you're clawing back money from disabled families and children of disabled parents. That is discriminatory. That is not what you said you were going to do. Your legislation that your other minister won't defend obviously won't solve the problem. You explain why you're discriminating against families with disabilities and their children.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, there is no change in their assistance benefit level. What they are eligible for remains what they are eligible for. We are not reducing or taking away the money that is part of their monthly income, and she knows that.

I think we should stress to the honourable member that our benefits for those who have disabilities who are on the system are 47% more generous than the other provinces.

Again, Ontarians would very much support that. Perhaps she's prepared to say that because someone with a disability is living on income support, somehow they're not going to be capable of employment. Certainly that's not what we heard from people with disabilities. Their program had a 50% failure rate getting people into employment. People with disabilities said that was unacceptable. That's why we developed the new Ontario disability support program, with its employment supports, so that those individuals would have the best crack they could have at the employment market, to work the way they want to work.

SAFE COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): My question is to the Minister of Labour. I understand that the minister was in Ajax-Pickering last week for the launch of Ajax-Pickering as an official safe community. I think it would be helpful if the minister were to explain to this House the role of the Safe Communities Foundation and how it's helping communities in our province.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I thank the honourable member for York-Mackenzie for the question. The Safe Communities Foundation is an incentive solution in health and safety that I'm hoping will soon be establishing roots in all Ontario communities.

Last week, the Ajax-Pickering launch of Safe Communities was held. It was the first in Durham region and the first in the GTA, and I hope other members in the GTA will encourage their local municipalities and small business people to get engaged in this important health and safety program, which is successful where it has been initiated in Ontario.

Under the program, firms gain access to expert health and safety consulting teams and new training programs and resources. The program has been honoured. On November 17, the Safe Communities Foundation received the Peter F. Drucker Award for Canadian non-profit innovation, one of only three winners in Canada.

The Safe Communities Foundation was founded by Paul Kells in 1996. His 19-year-old son was killed in an industrial accident.

Mr Klees: I'm sure all members of the House and everyone in Ontario appreciates the work of the foundation. I wonder if you could explain to us how the Safe Communities incentive program is benefiting companies in the province.

Hon Mr Flaherty: The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board has an incentive program with respect to rebates for small businesses that participate in the Safe Communities solution. Many are eligible for rebates: 56 Brockville-area companies have recently received cheques totalling \$113,000; in Waterloo, 48 companies received cheques totalling \$350,000. This is for improving their health and safety records, reducing lost-time injuries and promoting safety in their communities. In Peterborough, 43 companies received cheques totalling \$200,000. The Safe Communities incentive solution is working. The Safe

Communities concept is spreading. The Safe Communities Foundation is saving lives. This government supports Safe Communities.

1440

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance and it has to do with the issue of property taxes. He will know we're dealing now with the seventh of his bills in the last 14 or 15 months.

The people who know this area best, in my opinion, are the municipal civil servants, the Clerks and Treasurers. What they said was that this bill is poorly designed and ill-conceived. They've offered substantially better and more manageable and less costly solutions, but you refuse to even talk to them. You won't even respond to them. So I said to them: "Don't worry, we're having committee hearings on this. Come on down and help improve the bill." But now I see, Minister, you're refusing to even hear from them.

Can I ask a simple question? Why in the world would you refuse to give our senior municipal civil servants who know this area, dare I say, far better than your bureaucrats an opportunity to come here and substantially improve your flawed bill?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Nothing could be further from the truth. Representatives of AMO were in my office this morning talking to officials from the Ministry of Finance about the very problem you're talking about. You'd better update your information.

Mr Phillips: I've got all my information right here. This afternoon you're moving a proposal that will refuse to allow anybody to come to our committee. You're gagging them. We want to hear from the public and you're gagging them. In a matter of minutes we're going to be dealing with this motion that will refuse to allow any of the public to come and present their views. That's your motion. That's the one we're going to be debating this afternoon.

Are you withdrawing that motion, Minister, and are you now finally agreeing that you've made another mistake and we will be allowed to hear from the public when we're dealing with your seventh in a long, unordered process of tax bills? Will you withdraw that motion and allow us to hear from the public on this?

Hon Mr Eves: I could go through the list, as I did one day last week, of tax increases when your government was in power. However, this bill that you want us to withdraw limits property tax increases to business taxpayers in Ontario to 10% in 1998, 5% in 1999 and 5% in 2000. I know you find that hard to believe, coming from a government that had tax increases of 50%, 60% and 73%. If you want to vote against limiting increases to businesses, you'll have the opportunity to do so.

LANDS FOR LIFE

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. Today you shut the door on any further public input into the recommendations from the Lands for Life process. It was clear from the beginning that you weren't really interested in hearing from the public anyway, because you only allowed 30 days for comment on some 242 recommendations. This is probably why the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, on November 20, asked you to extend the deadline for the consultation for Lands for Life by at least another two weeks, if not another month.

Minister, you have completely ignored that request. You have given it the back of your hand. Can you explain to this House why you refuse to extend the public consultation on Lands for Life when you have been specifically asked to do so by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to thank the member opposite for the question and this opportunity to clarify the record, because factually I believe you're incorrect.

I twice extended the public consultations on the Lands for Life process. On two occasions, when asked by the round table chairs for an extension so they could have more deliberations and more public input into this very important issue, I said yes. If the member checks, she'll realize that the Lands for Life process was scheduled to end last spring. In fact, we have extended it and we have extended it a further 30 days for responses from the public to the reports of those round tables.

Ms Martel: The question specifically was, why have you ignored the recommendation by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario to extend the 30-day deadline for input on the Lands for Life recommendations? You can choose to ignore that, Minister, as you've chosen to ignore the Environmental Commissioner, but the fact remains that from the beginning there has never been enough time for the round tables to do their work or for the public to have their say. The round table members themselves never even saw this report before it was released publicly. The chairs drafted it and signed it off without the endorsement of the rest of the round table members. The round table members also made it clear that the public had not seen any of the draft recommendations submitted to you, despite a commitment made to do so. Finally, the round table chairs made it clear in this report that they hadn't had enough time to even do their work to complete this report properly.

The question is again, Minister, why are you refusing to accede to a request by the Environmental Commissioner to extend the deadline for public consultation on the Lands for Life recommendations?

Hon Mr Snobelen: This is again a chance to provide some better information to the member opposite, who clearly is misinformed on this issue. I think if the member opposite were to do some more research on this, she might

found out that in fact we have been working to extend the time period for public consultation.

She also might find out that the draft recommendations submitted by the round tables are publicly available. The draft recommendations are publicly available and the consolidated report is publicly available on our Web site.

As to the 30 days for public comment on the consolidated report, let me say again what I said earlier. The Leader of the Opposition stood up earlier today and suggested that we hadn't advertised the consolidated report. In fact, we advertised in 72 newspapers about the consolidated report. We've made it available on our Web site.

I have said before, last week, that we will give this public consultation period some weight and some consideration, we'll listen to what people have to say and we'll make a response to it.

GREATER TORONTO SERVICES BOARD

Mr John L. Parker (York East): My question is for my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Interjections.

Mr Parker: If the opposition would just calm down a bit, I might get this question on the record.

Minister, as one or two of the members opposite will be aware, second reading debate began just last week on the Greater Toronto Services Board legislation. As a member from within the greater Toronto area, I certainly know that there's a great deal of interest in making progress on this very important issue. I'm also very aware that the need for better coordination of services in the GTA has been discussed for many years by many governments with absolutely no action until the introduction of the bill recently by this government. Could you please provide to the members of this House an overview of what this legislation is intended to accomplish if it's passed?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for York East for that very excellent question. I think all members of this House will recognize that there is a tremendous need to coordinate the activities that currently take place within the greater Toronto area. With the formation of the new city of Toronto, which is working very well, and with the services that are delivered from Oshawa in the east to Burlington in the west, there is a need to ensure that the delivery of services such as transportation, GO Transit in particular, strategies for waste disposal, strategies for economic development, all have to be coordinated across the entire GTA area.

The Greater Toronto Services Board is intended to do that and I'm quite confident that it will do that. It will be made up of representatives, one from each member in the greater Toronto area, all working together for the first time in the history of the greater Toronto area, to ensure that services are coordinated.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Can we get some order, please. Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Parker: Minister, I think we are all aware that the establishment of a Greater Toronto Services Board is indeed a monumental undertaking. We know that the GTA is an area of immense diversity. There are a wide range of stakeholders and interests across the greater Toronto area which need to be taken into consideration in the establishment of a Greater Toronto Services Board. Can you please advise us about the process of study and consultation that your ministry undertook in developing the legislation for a Greater Toronto Services Board?

Hon Mr Leach: Again, I thank the member for York East for that question. I think most members in the House would recognize that there has probably been more study done on this particulate issue than there has been on most other subjects. It began prior to our government, when the previous government engaged Anne Golden to look at the greater Toronto area. We completed that report when we took office. We got her recommendations and had those recommendations again massaged and reviewed by Milt Farrow, who went out and developed more detailed recommendations.

After doing that and then consulting extensively with every municipality in the greater Toronto area, we developed draft legislation which we tabled last spring. We gave the communities affected the opportunity to have all spring and all summer to review that legislation.

We are now in the process of second reading. When finished second reading, we will be going to committee for some amendments, I am sure, and then hopefully back here for implementation.

1450

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. To follow up on a question last week with regard to the testing in the areas around landfill sites in Ontario, on Friday Greenpeace brought forward some further alarming evidence as to what may be happening around dump sites right across this province. They have asked for extensive testing as well. As we know, we are talking about cancer-causing pollutants, and if this problem is occurring in the Toronto area, we have no reason to believe this may not be occurring right across the province.

Minister, you suggested that municipalities should undertake the testing and that they should be the ones who can give you the information. Let me suggest to you that most municipalities in this province do not have the technology or the resources to undertake the type of extensive air quality testing around dumps and landfill sites to be able to come forward with the evidence that you're looking for.

This is a serious problem, and it is a problem right across Ontario. You, Minister, are responsible for the well-being of the environment in this province, and in my view are responsible for ensuring that proper testing is happening. Will you undertake today to commit the

province of Ontario to undertake extensive testing of air quality around all landfill sites in the province?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): As you know, we are very concerned about air quality problems in this province, not only around landfill sites but all across Ontario. That's why we are implementing a number of significant programs in this province for the first time. The Drive Clean program is perhaps the greatest and most extensive one that we are doing.

With regard to air quality around the landfill sites, perhaps if the member would check Hansard with regard to his question last week, I said to him at that time that because of the concern that had been raised last week, although there is no clear evidence that has been presented to me or my ministry of a problem, I had contacted the mayors of the various municipalities around this greater Toronto area, and if they felt they needed some help with their air quality monitoring, I had offered it to them.

Mr Agostino: Minister, let me ask you about another one of your brainwaves. About two months ago I asked you in the House about the practice of dumping blood down the sewers. You refused to rule that out at that point. You have now received a formal request from the funeral homes and hospitals across Ontario, asking you to formally approve the dumping of blood down the sewer system in this province. As you know, it is now hazardous waste, to be treated as such, and therefore it has to be processed before it can be dumped.

Very clearly, you cannot approve this request. There is no 100% method that will guarantee the safety of blood down the sewer. We are talking about blood from dead bodies here, Minister. We are talking about people who are ill, we're talking about contaminants, we're talking about illnesses. Very clearly, you have a responsibility today to stand up and tell the people of this province —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Hamilton East, I just want to be clear with you. Supplementaries are supplementary to the original question.

Mr Agostino: It's dumping.

The Speaker: It's dumping, but it's got nothing to do with the original dumping. As far as I am concerned, you can continue. I will caution you: It has to relate to the first question in some way, besides dumping, if you know what I mean.

Anyway, continue. You have 10 seconds to put your question.

Mr Agostino: Minister, let me ask you the question very clearly: Will you today stand up in the House and make it clear that you will not allow and formalize the dumping of blood down the sewers from funeral homes and hospitals across Ontario?

Hon Mr Sterling: Some time ago we put out a draft waste regulation for consultation purposes. This particular consultation took place over the last four or five months, and after reviewing the comments with regard to that waste regulation put forward only as a proposal, I have decided not to move forward with it at this time.

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): In the absence of the Premier and the Minister of Health, I direct my question to the acting Premier. I want to talk about the so-called expansion of new MRI machines, magnetic resonance imaging machines, across the province. This is something your government trumpeted in budgets, that your Minister of Health talks about all the time as one of the great improvements you've made. You should be aware these machines cost \$2.5 million to buy and another \$1 million per year to operate, yet your government has given hospitals only \$150,000 a year towards the operation of these machines, and there is no focused capital program. Most of the hospitals have to purchase these machines themselves.

Minister, half the hospitals in this province are already operating on deficits, and many others are barely managing to get a balanced bottom line. Would you explain to us how you expect any of these hospitals to take up your government's offer?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): If the honourable member doesn't think there's need for more MRI machines in the province of Ontario, she should say so. This government has a policy of virtually tripling the number, from 12 to 35, which is more than the entire rest of the country combined. If she has a problem with that, I would say to her, why didn't you do that when you were there, if you were so concerned about these people?

Mrs Boyd: We certainly did believe that we ought to expand the number of MRIs, and our party had been very clear that this is one of the few ways in which long-term medical health costs can be saved. In 1995, our government announced a full new capital program which would fund the purchase of MRIs and full funding for their operation. As soon as you came into government, you cancelled that. You said your goal was to raise the number to 35. Of the 18 so-called new MRIs, 12 were already in operation, and only six other hospitals have been able to take you up on your offer.

The hospitals are strapped for cash. They can't afford the cost of operating the machines, and they know better than to spend their capital costs on these machines when they can't operate them. Minister, will you agree in your budget to provide \$1 million in annual operating costs for each MRI in this province, as the OHA has recommended?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, the honourable member talks about the amount of money we're spending on health care. This year we're spending \$19 billion on health care; you spent \$17.4 billion in your best year. You thought it was sufficient for the people of Ontario that you profess to be concerned about to have 12 MRI machines in the entire province of Ontario and send patients to the United States of America for treatment.

We think we should have three times as many machines as you thought were sufficient, so where do you — you were there for five years; you did nothing. You did do a

few things, though: You cut \$60 million from psychiatric hospital funding when you were there and you closed the 181 mental health beds in your very own community while you sat as a member of cabinet. That's your record on health care.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Last Thursday you were in Niagara bringing good news to the Ontario winemakers. You told the local representatives about your plan to introduce legislation that would strengthen the local wine industry and help pave the way to improve access to the European markets. Minister, would you inform the people of my riding how your VQA legislation will improve the state of Ontario's wineries?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I'd like to thank the member for Lincoln for the question. As you know, last Thursday we introduced some legislation to bring in the VQA appellation here in Ontario. This will of course bring a standard of quality which will be attached to premium wines in the province.

Why are we doing this? In April 1999, the European Union will bring in some rules which will require mandatory quality certification. This legislation, if passed, will provide the tool for our Ontario wine industry to have access to European markets. It will also give an assurance to people in Ontario that they have a fine and great quality of wine.

I will just quote Len Pennachetti, who is the VQA chair. He said, "The legislation of VQA standards by the Ontario government is one of the most important developments in the evolution of the provincial wine industry to date."

1500

STATUS OF LEGISLATION

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I want to read the decision with respect to the point of order the member for Fort William brought forward on Thursday, November 24.

On Thursday, November 24, the member for Fort William, Mrs McLeod, raised a point of order with respect to the Education Quality Improvement Act. She referred to section 137 of the standing orders which sets out the duties of legislative counsel. She sought advice on whether or not, under this standing order, legislative counsel had a role to play in light of our recent court decisions.

Let me begin by saying that the act to which the member refers has already been passed in this House. It has received royal assent. It is the law. It is therefore beyond any authority of the Speaker.

With respect to the role of legislative counsel under standing order 137(c), any report that they make to the executive council would be made while a bill is still before the House or earlier. Whether or not that was done

in this case is not something that I would want or have knowledge of.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This 130-page, 1,001-signature petition is to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas SO₂ emissions from mining and smelting operations remain a serious threat to the health, environment and property of Sudbury citizens;

"Whereas there continues to be ongoing intolerable peaks in levels of SO₂ emissions from mining and smelting operations;

"Whereas the threat of fugitive emissions remains constant to the Sudbury region;

"Whereas existing government regulations and thresholds for SO₂ emissions may be in need of immediate reassessment;

"Whereas the elimination of 26 regional Ministry of Environment jobs by the Harris government has resulted in lowering monitoring effectiveness;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Mike Harris government aid the citizens of this community in having these emissions monitored closely and reduced significantly."

I proudly sign this Sudbury Committee for Clean Air petition as I am in full agreement.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I am tabling today 1,860 names on a petition to protect Ontario's wilderness. It reads:

"To Premier Harris and the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas crown land belongs to all residents of Ontario; and

"Whereas over 80% of Ontarians support the protection of the remaining wilderness areas in this province; and

"Whereas many in the forestry industry have called for increased logging in parks and protected areas; and

"Whereas over 90% of the trees cut in Ontario are harvested by the unsustainable method of clear-cutting; and

"Whereas employment in the forestry industry has steadily declined due to increased mechanization; and

"Whereas tourism is the world's fastest-growing industry and ecotourism is the fastest-growing sector of tourism; and

"Whereas the land use planning exercise called Lands for Life is dominated by industrial interests; and

"Whereas the Lands for Life structure has purposely excluded Ontarians living outside the planning area; and

"Whereas most Ontarians are unaware that this process is underway; and

"Whereas decisions made now around tenure will be almost impossible to change by future governments;

"We, the undersigned, petition Premier Harris and the Parliament of Ontario to immediately scrap the Lands for Life initiative and undertake a truly inclusive land use planning process that incorporates the views of all Ontarians, who are the owners of this crown land, and commit the province to protecting significant areas of wilderness both for today and into the future.

I'll affix my signature to this petition as I agree with it.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those provisions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking and the ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas Bill C-68, chapter 39, section 8.3 of the federal bill allows 12-year-olds to possess firearms in accordance with licensing provisions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has simply passed a regulation requiring such applicants to complete the Ontario hunter education program; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic of illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals" —

This goes on, but I support the intent, and I'm going to add my name to the signatures.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition addressed to the assembly of Ontario, and it concerns education. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is cutting the heart out of many communities by closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario, including one of the most community-oriented schools, Hughes public school; and

"Whereas this massive number of school closings all at once will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely; and

"Whereas Mike Harris is pitting parent against parent and community against community in the fight to save local schools; and

"Whereas parents and students in the city of Toronto, and indeed many other communities across Ontario, are calling on the government to stop closing so many of their schools;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand that Mike Harris and his government stop closing local schools, especially those that are closely associated with the communities, such as Hughes public school."

I affix my signature.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas crown land belongs to all the residents of Ontario; and

"Whereas over 80% of Ontarians support the protection of the remaining wilderness areas in the province; and

"Whereas many in the forestry industry have called for increased logging in parks and protected areas; and

"Whereas over 90% of the trees cut in Ontario are harvested by the unsustainable method of clear-cutting; and

"Whereas employment in the forestry industry has suddenly declined due to increased mechanization; and

"Whereas tourism is the world's fastest-growing industry and ecotourism the fastest-growing sector of tourism; and

"Whereas the land use planning exercise called Lands for Life is dominated by industrial interests; and

"Whereas the Lands for Life structure has purposely excluded Ontarians living outside the planning area; and

"Whereas most Ontarians are now unaware that this process is underway where decisions made now around tenure will be almost impossible to change by future governments;

"We, the undersigned, petition Premier Harris and the Parliament of Ontario to immediately scrap the Lands for Life initiative and undertake a truly inclusive land use planning process that incorporates the views of all Ontarians who are owners of this crown land and commit the province to protecting significant areas of wilderness for both today and into the future."

I proudly affix my signature to this.

ABORTION

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I have a signed petition from 450 constituents from my riding of Sarnia and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993, at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I am very happy to add my signature to this petition.

1510

ELECTION CALL

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the current provincial government under Mike Harris has destroyed labour relations, gutted the WCB, caused rampant dependence on gambling, has contributed to mass homelessness and poverty while eroding our health care, educational and municipal institutions, we, the people of Chatham-Kent, are demanding that an election be called now, before the province is destroyed, morally, ethically and financially."

I affix my name to this.

ADOPTION

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have petitions here signed by folks in Ottawa and surrounding areas, including Manotick, in support of Bill 39, the Access to Adoption Information Statute Law Amendment Act. I will simply summarize the petition here.

The petitioners are supporting the proposed legislation to allow access to birth registration and adoption records for adult adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents and other relatives; implement a no-contact notice option; recommend optional counselling; offer access to other information, including medical; and acknowledge other open adoptions.

I affix my signature to it.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas most Ontario residents do not have adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure

the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Mr David Caplan (Orillia): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas providing daycare spaces is critical for the families in Toronto that need access to them; and

"Whereas the well-being of children should not be sacrificed for tax cuts; and

"Whereas the provincial government has significantly cut the budgets for Toronto school boards; and

"Whereas under the provincial government's ill-conceived Bill 160 there is no flexibility for boards to make up for the cuts; and

"Whereas daycare spaces in schools are now threatened by these cuts with the prospect of full-cost recovery arrangements with daycares and the threat of school closures;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to repeal Bill 160 immediately, and

"Further be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario instruct the Minister of Education and Training to restore meaningful and flexible funding to the Toronto school boards to ensure that they are able to continue to accommodate our community daycares; and

"Further be it resolved that the Honourable Dave Johnson, Minister of Education and Training, takes responsibility for his government's funding cuts rather than passing the buck to school boards who have no control over provincial government spending cuts."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and I affix my signature.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have a petition regarding red light cameras.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas red light cameras can dramatically assist in reducing the number of injuries and deaths resulting from red light runners; and

"Whereas red light cameras can only take pictures of licence plates, thus reducing privacy concerns; and

"Whereas all revenues from violations can be easily directed to a designated fund to improve safety at high-collision intersections; and

"Whereas there is a growing disregard for traffic laws resulting in serious injury to pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and especially children and seniors; and

"Whereas the provincial government has endorsed the use of a similar camera system to collect tolls on the new Highway 407 tollway;" — and I paid my bill, Mr Speaker — "and

"Whereas mayors and concerned citizens across Ontario have been seeking permission to deploy these cameras due to limited police resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario support the installation of red light cameras at high-collision intersections to monitor and prosecute motorists who run red lights."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to it.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It was sent to me by Joe Hueglin of Niagara region, signed by himself and 30 others.

"Whereas all schools in Ontario should be safe learning and working environments; and

"Whereas all Ontarians should be assured that safe school programs are in place in all Ontario schools; and

"Whereas a private member's bill has been drafted entitled An Act to Promote Safety in Ontario Schools and create positive Learning Environments for Ontario Students, 1998; and

"Whereas this bill will:

"Require all boards in Ontario to design and implement school safety programs, school codes of conduct, and anti-vandalism policies;

"Provide for effective early intervention strategies by requiring boards to design and implement anti-bullying policies and by providing boards with the ability to direct psychological assessments of students that they believe are at risk;

"Provide a provincial violence and weapons-free schools policy and allow boards the ability to exclude violent students from regular classroom settings;

"Give police the tools they need by creating a new provincial offence for trespassing on school property and backing it up with real consequences;

"Direct all boards in Ontario to design and implement alternative education programs for suspended and excluded students;

"Require parents to be liable for any damage done to school property by their children; and

"Protect teachers and staff from civil liability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass into law the Safe Schools Act as quickly as possible."

I have affixed my signature to this worthwhile petition.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I have a petition signed by many, many residents of Downsview.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Mike Harris is cutting the heart out of many communities by closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario; and

"Whereas this massive number of school closings all at once will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely; and

"Whereas Mike Harris is pitting parent against parent and community against community in the fight to save local schools; and

"Whereas parents and students in the city of Toronto and many other communities across Ontario are calling on the government to stop closing so many of their schools; and

"Whereas the riding of Downsview needs its schools, such as Ancaster Public School, Calico Public School, Downsview Public School, Elia Middle School, Highview Public School and Pierre Laporte Middle School, which are both academic and vital community institutions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand that Mike Harris stop gutting communities and stop closing our schools."

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition and I'm pleased to affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 79, An Act to amend the Assessment Act, Municipal Act, Assessment Review Board Act and Education Act in respect of property taxes, when Bill 79 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs;

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted;

That the standing committee on finance and economic affairs shall be authorized to meet for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on Monday, December 7, 1998,

from 9 am to 12 pm and following routine proceedings until the completion of clause-by-clause consideration;

That at 4:30 pm on Monday, December 7, 1998, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, after which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading of the bill may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

1520

I will be sharing the time with the member for Nepean, the member for York-Mackenzie and the member for Kitchener. Right now, I'd like to pass the floor to the member for Nepean.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak to this motion to try to deliver on the commitment to 10%, 5% and 5%, which is exceptionally important for small businesses.

The issue of property tax reform is a tough issue. There is a reason why no government wanted to take on this issue. The easy thing is always to put something aside for later. Why delay what you can put off until tomorrow if you can put it off indefinitely? That's been the policy of successive governments in Ontario for many, many years. At some point you have to confront the difficult and tough issues as they present themselves. Certainly that's been the hallmark of this government's. We've tried to make some real changes to government, and no more so than in the way, overall, taxes are collected for the public sector.

Rather than bring in an omnibus property tax bill, this government chose wisely to break it up into pieces. Rather

than bring in assessment, we brought in the fair share assessment, which is important.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Oh, give us a break. This was all a plan, like closing hospitals. I love it.

Mr Baird: I know there are some members opposite who would have preferred a big omnibus tax bill, but that's an approach we rejected. They can want us to sit back and watch while small business is whacked by municipal governments, but we said, "No way." We wisely took this issue and cut it up into a few bite-size pieces. We put property assessment into one piece of legislation. We dealt with education taxation issues in another. We set up the Ontario Property Assessment Corp in another bill and we brought forward some tools for municipalities in this bill before us today. That is something I believe is important to do, to allow for full and proper debate of all these important political issues.

Mrs Boyd: That's why this is a time allocation bill.

Mr Baird: Time allocation bills: Of course this government spends more time in first reading, second reading and third reading than did the Liberal government and the NDP government. We spend more time on second reading, the debate in principle. The NDP spent a significant amount of time less than we did. Indeed we supported the NDP when they brought in time allocation when we were in opposition, so no one can accuse us of taking the wrong stand. The Liberals are against anything. I'll give the NDP some credit. They are prepared to stand up and be counted on tough issues. We look forward in this debate to our friends in the Liberal Party doing the same thing.

I want to make reference on one issue to a Liberal who has broken the ranks to come out in support. He's made some general comments. I want to quote this member. The Minister of Labour will be interested in this: "Veteran Liberal Dennis Mills, MP for the downtown Toronto riding of Broadview-Greenwood, said he won't rush out to help his provincial cousins because he likes some of Mr Harris's policies."

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Hear, hear.

Mr Baird: The member for High Park-Swansea says, "Hear, hear."

Mrs Boyd: I always said there's nothing to choose between the two of you.

Mr Baird: I say to the member for London Centre, they can choose the real thing or a pale imitation. I'm going to read the quote from Dennis Mills, a crusader for tax reform with the federal Liberals.

Mr Shea: A thoughtful MP.

Mr Baird: "A thoughtful MP," the member for High Park-Swansea says. I'm going to read it: "I am a passionate believer in comprehensive tax reform. Some of my tax ideas are not inconsistent with the Harris thought process on tax reform."

I've got to compliment Dennis Mills, a crusader for tax reform, who has come forward and said he likes the general direction of comprehensive tax reform.

Mr Shea: A strong supporter of Paul Martin.

Mr Baird: Indeed, a strong supporter of Finance Minister Paul Martin, as the member opposite said.

We know what the overall thinking in terms of the government's comprehensive tax reform is from some leading Liberal thinkers in finance and taxation, and a very well-respected person in not just the city of Toronto but indeed the province of Ontario.

We looked at the issues in property taxation. We gave municipalities the tools to ensure that small business was protected as we move into this reform process. Why would we do that? Because small business is the economic engine of the Ontario economy. In Ontario, if you want to create jobs, you've got to bring small business to the table. For many years Ontario was the economic engine of Canada. We were a magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity. But when the socialists were elected we became known as being a mismanaged debtor, over-governed, over-regulated and overtaxed. Then the NDP followed the Liberals, for another five years of socialist rule, and we dug ourselves deeper into the hole of —

Mrs Boyd: Did you call the Liberals socialists?

Mr Baird: The Liberal socialists and the real socialists, the New Democratic Party.

If you look at the Ontario economy, the real troubles in our economy happened between 1985 and 1990. Despite the popular conception that Bob Rae and the NDP government ratcheted up government spending, it was the Peterson Liberals who were responsible for that.

Mr Bill Grimmitt (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): They were the main culprits.

Mr Baird: "The main culprits," the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay says.

What did the Peterson Liberals do? In five years the Peterson Liberals took spending from \$26 billion to some \$52 billion. Indeed, we have not seen a 100% increase in the expenditures of the government of Ontario. The government of Ontario's budget certainly hasn't gone up by upwards of 20% a year like it did in those years, and no, we have not cut health care. We saw the real financial mismanagement presented by the Liberal government, so it's interesting to see some of the Liberal complaints on this bill. But I digress.

We stepped in to help small business, because if you want to create jobs, you've got to bring small business to the table. I know this is the case right across the province, whether it's in High Park in Toronto or in Bells Corners in Nepean or in the greater Toronto area or up north. You bring small business to the table and you try to work hard to get the environment right for small business and allow them to create jobs. These small business people are the real job creators. They're the entrepreneurs who put it all on the line, sometimes mortgaging their own homes to be able to open up shop and get the whole family involved and start off maybe creating a job or two, and a few years later they're able to create four or five, and the next thing you know the enterprise is employing 10 or 15 people. That is good news for the Ontario economy.

Some municipalities chose to use the tools the provincial government provided them. I think of the city of Toronto, which chose them. I think of the county of Wellington, so ably represented by my colleague Ted Arnott.

Wellington county made a very honest and noble attempt to try to use some of the tools in the bill to help small business in their area. I know that in my home community of Ottawa-Carleton to some extent they used the tools and certainly made a sincere effort in that regard. But alas, that was not the case everywhere.

We were faced with a fundamental choice: Were we going to sit by and watch small business get whacked, or were we going to step in and intervene? The consensus among my colleagues was that we had to step in and intervene to help small business, because the economy is not finished creating jobs. We have work to do. As long as there is one person out there looking for a job, we want to do everything we can to help that person, and the job is not yet done. We need to see more economic growth in Ontario and to follow examples like Toronto, Wellington and Ottawa-Carleton's lead.

But where is the economy going today? I think we've seen some positive economic news. We look at interest rates declining again. Effective just two weeks ago, Canadian chartered banks lowered their prime rate from 7% to 6.75%. Ontario exports were up in September. Ontario auto sales were up in September. Ontario housing starts jumped 11.3% in October. Ontario MLS home resales rose 3.8% in September.

When I look at my own constituency in my own part of the province, we see good economic news. We see substantial numbers of new homes in Longfields and Davidson Heights and in neighbouring communities like Stittsville, Kanata and Orleans, where more homes are being built and more families are moving in. In the city of Toronto we see that new home sales were up in October. The member for High Park-Swansea will know about that.

The Canadian economy is expanding. The real GDP rose at a revised 1.3% annual rate in the second quarter of 1998, following a 3.1% gain recorded in the previous quarter. Consumer and business spending rose strongly, and that is good news.

1530

Small business is doing well, but big enterprises are doing well as well. Big banks in Fort York, the riding of Mr Marchese, who is here today, are doing very well and in the great riding of Trinity-Spadina. That's good news.

But what the member for Fort York and others have to realize is that there is not an 80-floor bank tower in Nepean. We need small business to help create jobs. We can't count on the big banks to create jobs in my community; we count on small business. That's why we're stepping in to help small business people, whether they be in Bells Corners or Barrhaven. Whether they're in Manotick, Greely, Osgoode, Richmond or Stittsville, we're stepping in to ensure that small business is helped, because we know that small business is the economic engine of Canada.

Ontario had strong economic domestic demand in 1998. In Ontario, domestic spending remains strong, with final domestic spending rising 1.4% in the second quarter.

A strong economy is forecast. Private sector economists are optimistic that the Ontario economy will remain

strong. The average private sector estimate for Ontario real GDP growth is 4% for 1998. The forecast range for 1999 growth is a solid 2.2% to 3%. That's positive, and we'll look forward with great anticipation. We want to continue to work to ensure the figures.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Because of the climate you guys produced.

Mr Baird: The member opposite talks about the climate. You want to get the climate right. Rather than subsidies to big business, rather than throwing money at everyone, we want to get the climate right, particularly for small business, dealing with the motion before us today.

The Toronto CMA has the strongest economy in Canada. It is expected to continue to lead other Canadian cities through the year 2002, according to the Conference Board of Canada.

When we look at where we have seen economic growth in Ontario, what region, what part of the province, it's not Toronto, it's eastern Ontario leading the way in economic growth in 1998, all over eastern Ontario. That's good news. Whether it be in Kingston, Cornwall, Ottawa or Renfrew, we've seen very solid economic growth, and that is indeed good news.

We certainly reject the notion that the provincial economy can't do anything for the economy. Some people in opposition say it's all the Americans, it's all the value of the dollar. But we believe you've got to help the economy, get the fundamentals right, and often that involves getting government out of the way, taking the shackles off the entrepreneurs and the small business people to let them realize their dreams.

Ontario employment was up in October. In October, Ontario employment rose 32,600, following a jump of 63,000 in September. We saw 63,000 new jobs in September and 32,000 new jobs in October, a very impressive rate. But again, we've got more work to do, because as long as there's one person looking for a job, that's one person too many and we've got work to do.

Good news: Youth unemployment was down in October. It fell by 9,000, following three straight monthly job gains. The youth unemployment rate is on the way down.

The Ontario help wanted index was up in October, rising 0.7%.

The good news is that 17,000 welfare dependants were able to break the cycle of dependency and join the 340,000 people who have stopped relying on welfare since June 1995. That's very good news.

Ontario department store sales were up 8.4% in 1998. Ontario retail sales were up in August. Ontario auto sales were up in 1998.

I know particularly in eastern Ontario, and I'd like to share this, we do very well in the federal public sector, being located in Ottawa, but the high technology sector, another big sector of our economy, is booming. But what we need in eastern Ontario is tourism, because tourism is a real job creator. They've had an excellent year this year. I know the member for Niagara Falls has worked very hard on tourism and tourism issues because it's a big job creator for small business people in his community.

We in our caucus get pretty much a weekly priority of the importance of tourism. Whether it's the new casino that the member for Niagara Falls fought so hard for, to try to encourage more benefits over, the new visitors are just streaming across the border with their money. The member for Fort York is right: It's good news, people coming from all over the United States and coming from Asia and Europe, coming to Niagara Falls to spend their money. Thank goodness that they have a casino and the member for Niagara Falls was successful.

The residential building permits were up by 2.6% in September. The business investment plans increased for 1998. Statistics Canada's latest investment intention survey — not the provincial government, but Statistics Canada, the federal agency — shows that Ontario business investment in plant and equipment is slated to increase by 3% in 1998, stronger than the previous 2.5% estimate released last February. That indeed is good news.

I could go on and on: non-residential building permits up in 1998, and you certainly see that in my constituency with the large expansion in Nortel, more than 4,000 new jobs; JDS Fitel, a big expansion going on in Nepean. I look at the new retail establishments, whether it's the Verona warehouse, whether it's a good number of the hospitality restaurants opening up at the corner of Merivale and West Hunt Club. The economy is indeed doing well.

But again, we mustn't be complacent because there are some corners where there is not enough hope and we must rededicate ourselves to working harder to getting those results up even more than they are today. The bill that this motion would send to committee for another day of discussions and debate would cap it at 10, 5 and 5 to ensure that small business is protected.

I know the honourable member for Fort York, M. Marchese, will wonder, why embark on tax reform? Because taxes were too high. They were way too high. The member for Fort York shares our view because he was part of a government that did cut taxes once — the commercial concentration tax. The commercial concentration tax was a Liberal tax, a whack on Toronto, and it was a tax that was so bad —

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): You talk about bad.

Mr Baird: "You talk about bad," the member for Lambton said —

Mr Marchese: And we got rid of it.

Mr Baird: — and this tax was so bad Rosario Marchese led the charge to get rid of it. You've got to compliment our socialist friends. It was a tax so bad even they could see how bad it was. When the New Democrats cut Liberal taxes, you know they were bad. The good news is that they got rid of that.

But both opposition parties allowed the huge commercial-industrial taxes that didn't just hurt Ottawa, and particularly Hamilton-Wentworth — the member for Wentworth East is here. He fought very hard to get commercial-industrial education taxes down in Hamilton. The city of Toronto was again whacked by \$400 million in

extra taxes that those hard-working businesses had to pay. You can go down the street in some parts of this region and see stores on one side of the road but not on the other because the tax burden was so high. This government is stepping in to cut commercial-industrial education taxes in communities, whether it's Ottawa-Carleton, whether it's Hamilton-Wentworth, whether it's the city of Toronto, to ensure that people can benefit.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): What about the tire tax?

Mr Baird: The New Democrats also got rid of another Liberal tax, the tire tax. A Liberal tax that was rolling along until the NDP stopped the tax. So the NDP certainly is a very junior partner as a tax fighter.

The \$400 million in extra taxes just in Toronto and more than \$500 million-odd around the province, previous governments sat by as those education taxes went up and up and up on property owners and this government stepped in to ensure that those taxes did not continue to rise, stepped in to ensure that it would be able to deliver some tax relief for small business, and that's something that is exceptionally important.

If we look in my own community of Ottawa-Carleton, small business is where you see the jobs created — not in Carleton. We haven't been traditionally as good over the last 25 years, particularly in Nepean. We haven't been as good at attracting large businesses to Ottawa-Carleton, but we've been very good at growing small business in Ottawa-Carleton. Look at a company like Newbridge Networks. They had revenues of only \$1 million just 11 years ago and they're doing exceptionally well, led by a very dedicated workforce of high-tech folks from all over the region of Ottawa-Carleton. We saw Corel, a company that was born in Ottawa, doing very well, an important priority.

1540

Previous people sat by and watched the taxes go up that crippled this type of development —

Mr Shea: And they didn't care.

Mr Baird: — and they didn't care. It was wrong to sit by and do nothing. I wonder, who were these school trustees who were continuously increasing taxes? Who were these school trustees who sat by and watched these small businesses be whacked? I say to the member for Fort York, does he know who these school trustees were who did this to small business people, and when he finds out, could he tell us? That would be a real priority because I suspect the member for Fort York would know very well who was a party to these huge tax increases that crippled —

Mr Shea: Wasn't he a trustee?

Mr Baird: Wasn't he a trustee? The member for High Park-Swansea would know. Trustees in Ottawa-Carleton didn't make \$50,000 a year, plus expenses. They certainly don't make that in Ottawa-Carleton, where I'm from. So the good news is that taxes were cut, but this is only part of an overall package about getting the economy right. The member for High Park-Swansea is a big advocate for

small business people in his community. I know he shares my view.

Mr Shea: The Bloor West Village.

Mr Baird: The Bloor West Village, he says. He's a big advocate of getting the environment right for small business. That's why I know he was a big advocate, as was I and so many of our colleagues, of trying to get a 2.5% cap for his business people. He fought very hard to give municipalities the tools. In fact, the member for High Park-Swansea led the charge for a 2.5% cap in Toronto within the government caucus and was able to deliver for small business people in his community. It would be important that I acknowledge that and put that on the record, because he led the charge for that and was able to deliver real results for his community. But where were the Liberals on this issue? The Liberals were nowhere to be seen. They were in hiding when the 2.5% cap came out.

What else have we done to try to help small business? We've announced the intention and then are following through to cut the small business corporate tax by 50% over the next eight years. In fact, that has already begun this year, as you know, Speaker, because there are a lot of good small business people, hard-working folks, in Stratford and St Mary's who are benefiting from that. Over the next eight years the corporate tax for small business will be cut in half, designed to make it as easy as possible for small business to create jobs.

Another important tax cut for small business people was the elimination of the employer health tax. The members opposite will know that's not being phased in over eight years. That's done: a 100% reduction in the employer health tax for small business with a payroll of under \$400,000, and that is indeed good news.

We talked to the good folks at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and they gave us a very detailed accounting of how they polled their members. The worst job-killer is, of course, payroll taxes. We listened to Judith Andrew and to Catherine Swift and they report that to us and show us the results from not just our particular ridings but right across the province and indeed the country. That's why the employer health tax elimination for small business people is exceptionally important. I know that has made it a lot easier.

I was talking to a small business person on Greenbank Road in my constituency and that's been a big help to him. He has been able to hire one and a half more people in his small business. That may not sound like an awful lot, but if you have every fourth or every fifth small business person being able to do that right across the province, it all adds up. We've seen more than 400,000 net new jobs: 425,000, 450,000 net new jobs. We've seen 80% of those come from small business, so we know that small business is creating the jobs, and indeed that is good news. While we're thrilled to see the good reports coming out of the auto manufacturers, Nortel and JDS Fitel, we are pleased to see the exceptionally strong numbers come out of small business. That's something that's very important.

If this motion is passed, we can get this bill to committee and have more debate and then come back to the

House for third reading and more debate, have an opportunity for clause-by-clause when we can consider and debate amendments to the legislation. Indeed, the government has said they're prepared to move forward on amendments from multiresidential ratepayers. We had some very good meetings with municipalities around the province.

We've certainly listened to mayors like Ottawa mayor Jim Watson, who is fighting hard for his constituents, as is the deputy mayor of Ottawa, Allan Higdon. I met over this weekend with the mayor of Nepean to discuss the issues affecting this bill, as well as this weekend with the mayor of Gloucester to listen to his concerns and to look at what room is available to ensure that the federal government meets its obligations.

All we're asking the federal government to do is to pay their fair share, just to do the same thing they do across the river in Quebec: pay the equivalent of the BOT — not an unreasonable argument. It would be wrong for them to try to pad their \$10-billion surplus with even more money than they've already budgeted to spend today, and we're confident they'll stand up and do the right thing.

All of this work to create an environment for job creation, whether it's in Bells Corners or Barrhaven or Manordale or Stittsville or Windsor or the north or Toronto, would be a lot easier if the federal government would step in and cut back the employment insurance account, because for too many the take-home pay of working families is less than it was in 1989. That is something of exceptional concern to us.

In fact the average Ontario worker is being ripped off to the tune of \$195 a year, and Canadian workers as a whole are losing \$3.5 billion. We just want the federal government, the federal Minister of Finance, to give the money back. You're taxing on the backs of hard-working families and small business people to pay for the employment insurance fund. The officials within the fund are saying that it's oversubscribed and that there's more than enough money there to deal with a severe recession, so give the money back. The hard-working families in Ontario worked hard and paid that money. Just imagine if every worker in Ontario had an extra \$200 this month to spend on their Christmas shopping and holiday shopping. What a benefit that would be to retail owners, whether they be at the Bayshore mall or in downtown Kitchener-Waterloo or in any store or small business across the province.

I think the federal government should do that right now, this month, to help boost consumer confidence and consumer spending this holiday season. That would be good news. In the words of a letter written to the Prime Minister, "It is time for the federal government to join with provincial governments of all political stripes and complement provincial efforts to improve the take-home pay of working families by reducing EI premiums."

The member for Fort York is here, and I know he and his party were prepared to stand up and fight for workers. Too bad the Liberal Party wasn't.

I'm pleased to be able to turn over the balance of my time to my colleague the member for York-Mackenzie, Frank Klees. Why is Frank going to have the opportunity to speak, followed by the member for Kitchener? Because Frank Klees, the member for York-Mackenzie, worked exceptionally hard on this issue. He brought the concerns of small business people in York region directly to the table when we were debating them, not just directly to the minister but he led the charge in our caucus for these efforts, and he so eloquently told the stories of small business people in his constituency, whether it was the story of Michael Evans from Home Hardware in his constituency or the story of Jim McAlpine from McAlpine Ford, about the huge tax increases they were facing. He came to the table and he argued for them, he fought for them, and the member for York-Mackenzie delivered. I want to hear the member for York-Mackenzie.

1550

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I'd like to thank my colleague for introducing me in such an eloquent way and for leading well and very effectively into my comments.

In a very real sense this has been the summer of discontent in this province. I was intimately involved for many hours over the course of the last number of months as the tax bills began to reach the front doors of businesses and residences in York region. I started to get telephone calls from business owners as well as residential property owners, multiple residential property owners, who shared with me their shock at having received a tax bill that was 50%, 100%, in some cases 200% and 300% and even higher, more than they had paid in the previous year.

The very disturbing aspect of the debate that then ensued over the next number of weeks and months was that unfortunately a great deal of finger pointing started to take place. Taxpayers were told to call my office. I have no objection to constituents calling me. As do any of my colleagues, I welcome calls from constituents. That's what we're there for: to deal with individuals' problems. But very quickly I heard that municipal politicians were suggesting to taxpayers that the reason for the substantial increases in their tax bills was provincial policy regarding reassessment, regarding the fair assessment act, regarding the so-reported prescriptive measures that the province had placed on municipalities. It took me some time to begin to enter into that dialogue and try to communicate to people in my constituency the facts of the issue.

Yes, it's true that in May 1997 this government introduced the Fair Municipal Finance Act. Under that legislation — by the way, all members of this House will acknowledge that there were very few who in any way suggested that it was not appropriate that there should be a fair assessment system province-wide. The truth of the matter is that there have been some properties that have not been reassessed in this province since the 1940s, and in some cases earlier. The story of multi-million dollar residences in downtown Toronto, in Rosedale, paying property taxes no more than homes that are worth

\$350,000 or \$400,000 in York region — no one in this place or anywhere in this province would suggest that is a fair system of taxation or assessment. To get all of the province's properties assessed fairly and on the basis of a current value is something that was broadly welcomed by people across this province — by municipalities, by elected officials at all levels of government in the province. That was the first point.

Unfortunately these significant tax increases were being blamed on that piece of legislation, on that reassessment process. It took some time to set the record straight, that those tax increases did not have to happen at all. In fact our government recognized full well that if you take an assessment system that has been so out of balance for so many years and you bring it all into one level in such a short period of time, there will be significant impacts, particularly on those properties that have been significantly underassessed for that number of years. We knew there would have to be a transition period during which those tax increases would have to be phased in, that it should not happen overnight. So as a government we introduced a number of measures initially, with the Fair Municipal Finance Act in May 1997, that would allow for mitigation of that.

In addition to that, we introduced Bill 16. That was introduced on June 11, 1998. Bill 16 was intended to provide a number of tools which could be utilized by municipalities to bridge and even out that transition period, because if it took some 40 to 50 years to get into this imbalance, surely municipalities would not anticipate that we could rebalance all that overnight in one year. Bill 16 allowed for a number of measures, including a phasing in of any increases, a capping of increases. It allowed for the ability to set up a number of classifications, special property classes. Unfortunately, in York region as in a number of other areas throughout the province, the municipal government chose, for whatever reason, not to implement those mitigating tools.

The result, then, was obvious. As property owners began to receive their tax bills, we saw headlines such as this one from the Aurora Banner: "Tax Blast Hits Aurora Business: 83% Jump in Commercial Property Tax Levies." This particular increase was received by Mike Evans, who owns the Home Hardware in Aurora. He came and appealed to me, "Mr Klees, how am I expected to deal with this increase overnight?" I received faxes from across the province, not only from within my constituency, from property owners who were facing the same significant increase in property taxes. They had businesses that were on the verge of bankruptcy if in fact they were expected to make these payments.

I was contacted by Ab Cox of Ab Cox Pontiac-Buick. He writes in his fax — and this, by the way, is addressed to Ernie Eves; this is a copy that was sent to me — "Our York region has dropped the ball on tax remedies. Would you please help businesses here." Mr Cox was appealing to the province to step in if the municipalities were not prepared to do something.

A letter from Glenway Country Club: They're referring to the fact that they were facing an \$82,000 increase in property taxes in one year. How were they to sustain their business under these circumstances? The suggestion in this letter was that a number of jobs in that particular business were at risk.

Yes, it was left up to the province then to step in and take the necessary action to introduce a piece of legislation that would do what, unfortunately, the municipalities were not prepared to do. I can tell you that that was the most disappointing heart of this summer's debate over this issue.

I arranged two specific meetings with our municipalities and Ministry of Finance staff to determine how we could find a way to mitigate the effects of these tax increases. We were told quite clearly in that meeting by the municipal representatives that no, they were not prepared to go back to first base on this, they were not prepared to reassess whether or not they should use the tools. The decision had been made by the municipality not to implement these tools. One reason that was told to me by a number of elected representatives at the municipal level of government was that they did not want to implement any kind of cap because if they did, then those businesses that had received significant tax decreases would have to wait to receive those decreases.

I have to tell you that a response like that is a clear indication that these people simply do not understand the reality of business today. How can we sacrifice businesses into which individuals in our province, in our municipalities, have invested their life's savings? We are prepared to sacrifice their businesses because someone down the road should be getting a tax decrease immediately rather than have to wait for a period of years to receive that?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Explain that to us. I'm the guy that's going to get the tax decrease; you explain it to me.

Mr Klees: The member opposite laughs because, I can tell you, it's clear he has never invested a nickel of his money into any business, or he wouldn't be laughing.

Mr Crozier: Which member are you talking about? Because I own two, Frank.

Mr Klees: I can tell you, you don't understand. Every time that I've had an opportunity to explain that situation to a businessman who was expecting that tax decrease, he or she understands that it is in fact fair for them to defer their decreases, because they understand that they are not an island unto themselves. They understand that the economic well-being of any community depends on the progress of the entire community.

1600 Members opposite in the Liberal Party have little to say when it comes to the economic stability of this province. They contributed to the significant debt of this province during the highest-growth period, during the period of time when the significant revenue stream to this province was greater than at any other time, and they took this province into the depths of despair. The number of tax increases that the Liberal Party imposed on businesses in this prov-

ince is unconscionable, which is why they set the stage for the NDP and the member for Fort York to come along and to take this province into the ground. Businesses began to leave this province in unprecedented numbers.

We promised the people of this province that we would introduce a fair taxation system. We introduced the legislation that set the framework for that. Unfortunately, there were those within this province at the municipal level of government who refused to implement those tax tools to make this a fair system. So we had no choice.

I commend the Minister of Finance for introducing Bill 79, which will bring stability to property taxation in the province for the first time in many years. It will let businesses know what their increases are going to be, that they are going to be limited. But more important than that is the fact that the taxation system for properties in the province will be fair, that everyone will be assessed on the current value of their property and that the tax rates that will be applied to that will reflect as well a fair level of taxation.

At the end of the day, we have to work in co-operation with the municipal level of government. This piece of legislation that is being introduced today will allow us to now look forward. Some mistakes were made in the past, quite frankly. That is regrettable. But we believe now that we've set the framework, we have laid the foundation for us now to move forward. This is work in progress.

Interjection.

Mr Klees: The member opposite wouldn't recognize work in progress if he saw it.

We are prepared now to work with municipalities to ensure that the right thing is done for the taxpayers. We will ensure that there is fair taxation, fair assessment across the province, stability that will lead to further economic security in this province.

I thank you and I'm going to pass the floor to my colleague.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I am pleased to stand in support of Bill 79, the Fairness for Property Taxpayers Act, 1998.

Mr Crozier: No, that's not debate. We're talking about stepping on democracy here.

Mr Wettlaufer: It's interesting to listen to the Liberals harp and carp over here. I haven't seen anything that they have done that has been concrete, that has been constructive in three and a half years. In fact, I haven't seen anything that they have done that has been constructive for more than 10 years.

Over the past three and a half years I have had the opportunity to meet with virtually thousands of my constituents, as members all through here and as you, yourself, have. We've had to explain to the constituents the difficult decisions, the reasons we are making them, the difficult changes that we are embarking on in this province and why we believe they are necessary for the well-being of our province.

As you remember, Mr Speaker, this government was faced with the reality that we had to succeed two spend-thrift governments. We had a debt of \$100 billion, annual interest payments of \$9 billion. You remember, don't you?

The massive debt load, and \$9 billion in annual interest payments, makes this interest payment one of the largest expenditures the government has. That large expenditure threatens the social safety net. Not only does it threaten the social safety net, but an entire generation of young people are faced with a debt which will not be paid off until they are in their senior ages. A 20-year-old student in university today won't have his own portion of that debt paid off until he is 60 years old. That's assuming, of course, that no government would increase the size of the debt, that any future government would continue our fiscally responsible policies. But, Mr Speaker, you and I know that the members of the Liberal Party and the members of the NDP would not continue our fiscally responsible policies.

We had to look at an education system and a property tax system that were outdated. We had an education system that wasn't being funded properly. Yes, there was lots of money being thrown at it, but it was not being funded properly. How could you explain that when we travelled through the north we found they were using textbooks that dated back to 1976? They were using textbooks that were being held together by Scotch tape and elastic. Not nearly enough students had textbooks. We then went to other areas of the province and found that they also suffered some of the same problems. But then we went to the Ottawa-Carleton area, we went to the Toronto area, Peel, York, and they had lots of money for their students. Students elsewhere in Ontario were not enjoying the same equality, were not enjoying the same opportunity as students in these areas.

We found that students in separate school systems weren't being funded to the same opportunities, to the same equal amounts, as the students in the public school system. We found that the students in the rural areas were not receiving the same fair funding as the students in the urban areas. It was necessary to make changes. Part of those changes entailed the property tax. There were some areas of the province that were just hiking property taxes all the time. It was spiralling at a rate that was out of control. We had property taxes that had gone up by 120% in 10 years; enrolment only went up by 16%. That's a 16% increase in enrolment and a 120% increase in property education taxes. Out of control.

1610

It was necessary then that we examine the property tax system. We did that and we found that there were some areas of the province that were being assessed on a modern basis, on 1990 property values, but then we found that in some other areas of the province they were paying taxes on assessments that dated back to World War II, 50 years out of date. We had to make changes. It was obvious that if we were going to make changes to reshape the economy, we had to make wholesale changes to bring spiralling education taxes under control and a sense of fairness to the entire property tax system in Ontario.

Why was it necessary to do this? We had to attract business. We had to send a message to business that Ontario is open for business. We wanted investment. We

wanted investment from foreign countries. We wanted investment from businesses that were already here, so that they wouldn't turn around and invest money in the United States or some other country. We wanted to ensure that they expanded their businesses right here in Ontario. Why was that important? It was important so that we could have an increased number of jobs, jobs for the people who live in this province. Is that so bad? According to the Liberals and the NDP, it most certainly is.

What has happened as a result of our policies? We have an environment in which 440,000 new jobs —

Mr Baird: How many?

Mr Wettlaufer: That is 440,000, I say to my colleague from Nepean, net new jobs that have been created in the province since we were elected.

I want to explain something here. I have this from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record business section, November 7, "Just when economists thought they had it all figured out, along came 57,200 jobs to confound forecasts of an economic slowdown."

In the month of October, usually a month in which things start slowing down, we had an increase in jobs in this country of 57,200, 40,000 of them in Ontario alone. Ontario is the province that is driving the engine of the economy in Canada.

We often hear criticism from the Liberals and the NDP. They're saying, "Oh, these are minimum wage jobs." Well, well. "The change in October's rate involved full-time jobs for adults, the kind of growth that has a sustainable spinoff effect on the economy," that's what it says right here in the business section of the Kitchener-Waterloo Record. The headline is "Job Surge Surprises Experts."

In addition, I have a clipping here from the Globe and Mail, November 23. Again, it says, "Economy Expected to Grow Faster than any G7 Nation." The subheadline is "From tax cuts and incentives to developing a more skilled workforce, Ontario is taking action to position the province for economic growth well into the next century. I want to quote from this article as well:

"Ontario's efforts to improve its business climate are paying off in jobs, with the province now leading the nation in job growth.

"And planning is underway to ensure that citizens of Ontario can continue to enjoy the benefits of economic growth well into the next century...put Ontario back on the map as a prime location for world business to invest.

"An attractive investment climate means jobs will be created for years to come, allowing Ontarians to participate fully in the new global economy.

"One of the most important steps the Ontario government has taken to spur economic growth...is to make tax cuts that will create jobs."

"That's a very strong positive, there's no doubt about that," said Sherry Cooper, chief economist for the investment giant Nesbitt Burns Inc, of the tax relief.

"The Ontario economy has rebounded and leads the nation."

We have done this, but then we also noticed that if we were going to have business investment, changes were necessary in the property tax area. We introduced the Fair Municipal Finance Act, but as a result of that act, we noticed that some of the municipalities were not equally as responsive to reducing the taxes for small business, and what we heard, as my colleague the member for York-Mackenzie said, was that it was a summer of discontent.

Small businesses came to us and said, "We are noticing a tax increase of 50% to 100% to 200% to 400% — to 600% in some cases." I had a number of small businesses come to me and say, "Isn't there anything you can do?" because the municipality, the city of Kitchener and the region of Waterloo were saying: "Talk to your MPPs. It's their fault. It's the downloading. It's the tax changes they have made." Well, that has been refuted recently as well, because we have noticed in the regional municipality of Waterloo that the tax increases they imposed were not necessary.

I quote from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record from this past Friday, November 27: "The municipality hiked taxes big time this year, 5.3%...\$2.2 million of public money burning a hole in its bureaucratic pockets."

Do you know what they found? This \$2.2 million was a surplus. They didn't need that 5.3%, so the municipality was trying to figure out ways of spending the money. The Record's lead editorial said: "Do give back most of the money. It's only fair. It's ours."

They go on: "But one of the biggest reasons for the optimistic budgetary forecast is that provincial downloading didn't cost nearly as much as the region feared. Remember the fire-breathing, downloading bogeyman?" That sounds like Liberals and NDP. "Remember how the region warned our taxes had to rise because it was taking over jobs once done by the province? Well, the region set aside a \$1-million contingency fund for downloading costs that it didn't have to touch because downloading wasn't such a big, bad monster after all."

This bill is designed to reduce, to avoid the property tax increases of the 50% to 600% that we were noticing. I quote again from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, from Friday, November 6: "Regional councillors are concerned larger businesses that actually benefited from the changes will now have to share their savings with smaller businesses that did not."

What was wrong with municipal councillors? Did they not do their homework?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): No.

Mr Wettlaufer: That's right. They didn't do their homework.

"In Waterloo region, 1,633 of 9,300 business properties received tax increases of greater than 35%, largely as a result of tax and assessment reform brought about by our province."

But the regional municipalities did not do their homework. They did not do equal work to ensure that small businesses, which create 80% of the jobs in this province, would receive the proper maximization or cap on their taxes. They downloaded on small businesses.

So now Waterloo region is saying it "needs \$12 million of the \$18 million in tax savings larger businesses got as a result of the tax reform." Was it so difficult for municipal politicians to look at the numbers and see that larger businesses didn't need the cuts but that smaller businesses, which were creating 80% of the jobs, did? Was that so difficult? Yes, it obviously was, so we again had to go back to the drawing board and bail out small business because municipalities couldn't. Instead, the Liberals and the NDP sit on their hands and complain and say, "Oh, you made a big mistake." If, just if, we had made a mistake, it was a mistake because we thought the municipalities had enough intelligence to do the necessary work. Not only that, I will say —

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Will you check for a quorum, please?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you check for a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Kitchener.

Mr Wettlaufer: Only a government that does nothing won't make mistakes. If we made a mistake, it was because we believed the municipalities had the intelligence to use the tools we provided them to ensure that small business would get the benefit of the tax cuts.

The Liberals can complain. They didn't do anything all the time that they were in government. The NDP didn't do anything either, except increase the size of the debt. They didn't do anything, so they can complain about making mistakes. They didn't make any mistakes because they didn't do anything. They did nothing to benefit small business; they did nothing to benefit the worker; they did nothing to benefit any business dealings, trade or anything in this province.

I am very pleased to support this bill.

1620

Mr Crozier: I welcome the opportunity to speak to the resolution that's on the floor. I would like to have consent that my colleagues from Prescott-Russell, Parkdale, Algoma-Manitoulin and St Catharines can share this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Crozier: Thank you.

As I said at the outset, it is my intent to speak to the resolution on the floor. I can understand why the government doesn't want to speak to the resolution, because the backbenchers who have spoken today are as frustrated as we are that this government is stepping on our democratic rights and bringing in a time allocation motion. So the government members have all chosen to speak to Bill 79, which actually isn't what's on the floor today.

In any event, before I do that, there were a couple of questions raised that I think I should answer. The member for Kitchener raised two questions. One was textbooks that he talked about, that some school boards didn't have

the textbooks they needed. Let me tell you, they've solved it today, because now they have these nice hardcover textbooks that you can rub out the printing from with your thumb. Therefore, I suppose, in the reasoning of the government today, these textbooks can be updated more easily, because all the students have to do is rub out the information in them. What a ridiculous way to spend money.

The member for Kitchener, as well as the member for York-Mackenzie, raised the question of taxes, deficits and debt. The member for Kitchener went on at some length, in fact, to suggest that previous governments have raised the debt and I suppose gave some veiled impression that this government hasn't. Well, to those who may be watching this debate today, I can tell you that for the five years the Liberal government was in power, it increased the debt of the province of Ontario by \$5 billion, and when the NDP government was in power they increased the debt — and the budget will show this — by some \$40 billion. By the time this government is finished, the debt will be \$120 billion. If you take the \$5 billion of the Liberals and the \$40 billion of the NDP, take that \$45 billion from the \$120 billion we're going to end up at, lo and behold, Conservative governments throughout the years will have contributed \$75 billion to the debt, almost three quarters of the debt. This government, which the member for Kitchener is so proud to say is so frugal, is going to have increased the provincial debt during its term of office by 75%.

That's incredible, that he would stand up there and chastise other parties for having increased the debt, when his own Conservative government and those that preceded it will be responsible for practically 75% of the debt — excuse me, less than 75% — between 70% and 75% of the debt that this province will owe at the end of this government's mandate.

That's all I have to say about answering the questions that the government members have brought up. They talked about increasing taxes. I have a document here, which is "Mike Harris the Taxfighter." I could reel off all the tax increases that Mike Harris supported when he was in the previous Conservative government, pages of tax increases that amounted to about \$1.823 billion a year.

But today we're really debating a resolution that's going to allocate the time we can spend dealing with Bill 79. At the end of this debate, and I have no doubt it's going to pass, because obviously the government has the numbers to do it, at the end of this sessional day, at or around 6 pm, this resolution will be passed, which will put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill. In other words, there will be no further debate at the second reading stage.

I was sent here by the constituents of Essex South to express not only my own opinion on these bills but, more importantly, also the opinion of the constituents of Essex South. I think when they did that they fully expected that I would be given full opportunity to debate on any and all issues. Frankly, I've lost track of the time allocation bills this government has brought in.

Mr David Caplan (Orlino): Thirty.

Mr Crozier: Thirty, my colleague tells me. It tells you two things: One is that they've managed the legislative agenda so poorly that they don't have time to discuss the bills they bring in. We know some of the ramifications of that, because we're now dealing, or will be dealing through this resolution, with about the seventh, some people will argue even the eighth, tax bill. The member from Kitchener says, "If we made a mistake." Well, they've brought in seven bills to try to correct it.

I agree with the member for York-Mackenzie. Way back in 1967, if it had been a fair tax bill, we wouldn't even be here today. We'd be discussing things like health care, education, the important issues of the day.

But not only at the end of today will we dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, but lo and behold, in their benevolence — I think it was the member for Nepean who said, "Well, this will go to committee, and we'll have an opportunity to deal with amendments." In three years here on committee work, I have yet to see an opposition amendment pass. Now, I'm not at every committee meeting, mind you, but I have yet to see one accepted at the committee meetings I'm at. So it's rather a hollow promise that we'll be able to make amendments to this bill and deal with them at committee. Part of the reason is that we're going to have the great sum total of three hours to deal with amendments at committee. If at the end of that three hours we haven't had a chance to move each of the amendments, they will be deemed —

Mr Baird: No, there's more.

Mr Crozier: It says here, "Clause-by-clause from 9 am to 12 pm." If that's four hours in your book —

Mr Baird: And then after routine proceedings.

Mr Crozier: It's following routine proceedings, until completion of the clause-by-clause. Well, you don't know when routine proceedings are going to, you know — give me a break. What you really want is three hours on the bill. Three hours, four hours, it really doesn't matter. What this government is doing is saying, "Look, we've screwed up these tax bills so badly that we're getting near the end of the session, we're getting near the end of the year, and we don't have time to properly discuss it and get input from some of the senior municipal servants in this province."

Then when we get to third reading, by the way, in the benevolence of this government, "upon receiving the report of the standing committee, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading," then we're going to get two hours to debate it. Not much to say for democracy in Ontario.

1630

That's my main concern here today: the fact that this government has stepped on democracy in this Legislature in this particular way, just in time allocation, let alone some of the other standing orders that have been changed. Democracy doesn't mean anything to this government, only that what they say is right. It doesn't matter that you

have any kind of say. Democracy is not important anymore.

I may be at risk in saying this, but I feel that the seat I have in this Legislature today is becoming less relevant every day. The Legislature itself is irrelevant. Premier Harris and those few people who surround him are the only people they think are relevant in this province today. I think it's sad that we have to be standing here using a sessional day to debate a resolution that's really taking away our democratic rights when it would be much more productive if we were standing here today debating the issues of health care and education.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : C'est avec plaisir que je prends la parole pour défendre les intérêts des payeurs de taxes foncières de l'Ontario, spécialement ceux et celles du secteur commercial-industriel ainsi que les propriétaires de logements multiples et édifices à logements.

Cet après-midi je peux écouter nos députés du gouvernement en place. Je peux m'apercevoir que ce sont tous des bons livreurs de messages Harris. Aujourd'hui, nous voulons restreindre les discussions, nous voulons limiter le temps alloué ordinairement pour débattre un projet de loi, surtout le projet de loi 79, qui se lit comme suit : Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière, la Loi sur les municipalités, la Loi sur la Commission de révision de l'évaluation foncière et la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne l'impôt foncier.

En limitant ce projet de loi aujourd'hui, je peux dire qu'encore une fois ce gouvernement essaie de cacher les erreurs qu'ils ont faites dans le passé, et aussi camoufler un projet de loi qui va mettre les municipalités en difficulté. Nous n'avons qu'à rappeler le projet de loi 26, l'«omnibus bill» qui était présenté en 1995, quelques mois après l'élection de ce gouvernement.

Je crois qu'en ce moment ce projet de loi est tellement important qu'on doit allouer tout le temps permis pour le débattre ainsi qu'informer la population ontarienne. Je crois que c'est un vrai fiasco. En anglais on dit, «It's chaos.» Nous sommes à débattre le septième projet de loi pour réparer des erreurs que ce gouvernement a faites jusqu'à ce point-ci, depuis qu'ils ont présenté le premier projet de loi.

On nous dit que ce gouvernement doit réduire la dette, doit réduire le déficit, mais laissez-moi vous dire que si nous n'avions pas la réduction de l'intérêt que nous connaissons dans le moment, la réduction de notre dollar canadien, avec le surplus de touristes que nous avons eu depuis un an, nous aurions pu avoir une année fiscale 1998 avec un surplus au lieu du déficit que nous avons actuellement. Mais on dit toujours : «Nous avons amélioré l'économie ontarienne. Grâce au gouvernement fédéral, on est toujours porté à nous blâmer lorsque le gouvernement ne peut pas atteindre ses objectifs. Nous avons permis, garanti, promis, lors de l'élection, que nous allions réduire les impôts personnels de 30 %. Nous l'avons fait.»

«Promise made, promise kept.» C'est ça qu'on nous dit toujours. Mais laissez-moi vous dire que cela va coûter aux payeurs de taxes ontariens 5 \$ milliards par année,

cette promesse, et ensuite on va couper tous les services que nous avons perdus. Nous aurions définitivement fini avec un surplus en 1998 et aussi commencé à réduire notre dette.

Si le gouvernement était à l'écoute — je crois qu'il ne l'a jamais été depuis l'élection — le 25 mai dernier, 1998, l'association des trésoriers et des greffiers a demandé au gouvernement de remettre le projet de loi à plus tard. On devrait faire des études et préparer notre personnel, leur donner la formation nécessaire afin que nous ne connaissions pas les fiascos que nous connaissons dans le moment.

Je peux m'apercevoir, comme j'ai dit tout à l'heure, que la majorité des membres du gouvernement, ce sont des livreurs du message Harris. Mais je serais très surpris de connaître combien de membres connaissent à fond le projet de loi.

À la mi-septembre dernier, je revenais de Collingwood. J'ai entendu à la radio dans la région de Barrie que tous les commerces d'Orillia étaient pour fermer leurs portes pour une journée au complet pour protester contre le gouvernement. Le gouvernement a dit, «Si vous fermez vos portes, ce sont vous autres qui vont en souffrir.» Mais le gouvernement n'était pas pour faire souffrir les revenus des taxes. Encore une fois, c'était un député conservateur qui est dans le bout, donc il a livré le message de M. Harris, «Ne faites pas ça.»

Tout ça pour vous dire que le gouvernement tient à nous dire que les municipalités n'ont pas suivi les politiques déjà établies dans le premier projet de loi. Personne, personne n'a été capable de suivre les directives. Seulement la ville de Toronto a été capable de garder leur maximum à 2,5 % d'augmentation telle que suggérée par le ministre des Affaires municipales à M. Eves. Donc, à ce temps-là on a dit seulement la ville de Toronto, mais il y a encore 586 municipalités en Ontario. Comment se fait-il qu'aucune des autres municipalités n'a été capable de garder leur maximum d'augmentation à 10 %, ou 2,5 % dans ce temps-là ?

Donc, le gouvernement est venu dire : «Là, maintenant il ne sera plus 2,5 %. On va mettre un "cap" à 10 %.» Mais le 10%, c'est ça qui va faire mal à tous les propriétaires de commerces. Ceux et celles qui avaient des évaluations trop hautes dans le passé ont connu des baisses de taxes, mais là on va remonter les autres à 10 % d'augmentation. Cela veut dire que c'est injuste. Je suis convaincu que quelqu'un va amener ça devant la justice, et vous allez voir encore une fois que ça va démontrer que le gouvernement a été devant avec un projet de loi sans faire des études et sans regarder à l'impact.

Lorsqu'on regarde le travail qu'on a demandé aux évaluateurs de faire en cette courte période, après avoir été avisés par l'association des greffiers et des trésoriers de la province, nous avons décidé de procéder pareil. Mais eux, dans des bureaux gouvernementaux, ont toujours dit, «C'est impossible.» Le bureau d'évaluation m'a dit, «Jean-Marc, c'est impossible de faire ce qu'ils nous demandent.» Les factures de taxes devaient être émises le mois de juin, rendues au mois de septembre. Plusieurs

municipalités n'ont pas encore fait parvenir leurs factures de taxes.

Encore là, on a procédé à vitesse plein d'erreurs. J'ai justement ici dans mon comté, à Alfred, un édifice qui était vendu à 225,000 \$. Le bureau d'évaluation l'a évalué à 568 000 \$. Donc, on doit faire appel, donc le processus va être long.

Qui va perdre dans tout ça ? Ce sont les municipalités. Elles vont avoir un manque à gagner. Puis avec ce nouveau projet de loi, on dit aux municipalités, «Vous n'avez que faire parvenir des nouvelles factures de taxes.» Personne dans le moment peut le faire, à moins qu'on le fasse à mi-terme, comme on dit. Le programme qui est dans les ordinateurs ne permet pas d'aller chercher ces informations-là.

Nous regardons à tous les jours dans les journaux de Toronto les gens d'affaires. Ils sont pris jusqu'au cou. On ne sait pas quoi faire. Je regarde ici une lettre adressée par Cathie Best, la présidente de l'association de greffiers et des trésoriers de la province. C'était clair que le projet de loi 16 ne pouvait pas rencontrer — on n'avait pas le personnel. Le gouvernement tient à couper du personnel, et on a voulu implanter un projet de loi ou un service qui aurait demandé le double de personnel que nous avons, puis encore on n'y serait pas arrivé.

Je regarde ici dans mon comté, avec le «downloading» qu'on a dit qu'on été pour faire réduire les taxes, que seulement 46 % de la taxe scolaire sera payée par les résidences. Je regarde les augmentations que nous allons voir.

Je regarde l'évaluation seulement dans mon comté dans le moment, dans ma circonscription de Prescott et Russell. Ça va coûter 784 000 \$ de plus pour le faire. On nous dit dans les bureaux d'évaluations : «Jean-Marc, ça ne se fera pas. Ça va coûter beaucoup plus cher, parce on nous demande de le faire à tous les ans.»

Les services d'ambulances qui ont été payés anciennement par le gouvernement : 2,9 \$ millions par année. C'est le taux de 1997.

Les services de santé : ça va coûter 2,376,000 \$ aux payeurs de taxes.

L'assistance générale : 860 000 \$. Les «family benefits», les prestations familiales, vont coûter 5 \$ millions de plus. La médication va coûter un demi-milliard de plus. Donc, on continue, on continue.

Le service policier va coûter 10 \$ millions de plus dans ma circonscription.

Je regarde la route 17. Aujourd'hui on parle de passer un projet de loi pour vendre la 407, mais dans notre coin, on ne veut pas la vendre. On veut la donner à la municipalité, en détérioration, dans des conditions lamentables. Là, aujourd'hui, pour aller chercher des équités pour la province, on dit, «On va vendre la 407 et puis on va avoir de l'argent de plus pour repayer nos gros salariés qui gagnent 200 000 \$, 300 000 \$, 500 000 \$ par année, pour leur donner leur 30 %.» Je crois que c'est épouvantable.

Je regarde dans la comté de Glengarry. Eux autres étaient peut-être en faveur des politiques du gouvernement

actuel, mais le comté de Glengarry va leur coûter 2,1 \$ millions pour les services policiers.

L'agriculture : nous perdons 1,5 \$ million.

L'évaluation : 50 000 \$.

Mais il y a une chose qu'il faut se rappeler : l'Hydro-Ontario, par l'an 2001. Attention, citoyens et citoyennes de Prescott et Russell, vous allez avoir des augmentations parce que l'Hydro est 30 \$ milliards en déficit.

Je crois que mon temps est terminé, mais j'aurais aimé parler sur ce projet de loi encore pour des heures parce que je crois que c'est une erreur, une erreur de ce gouvernement d'arriver de mettre un maximum après qu'on a fait des erreurs comme on en a fait. On doit remettre à toutes les municipalités un montant d'argent qui va compenser pour les pertes de revenus.

1640

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I'm delighted to join in this debate about the time allocation motion. As was stated earlier, and I think all Ontarians should know this, this government has introduced 30 time allocation motions in this session. That does not speak well of democracy. It indicates a problem in management. So for this government to come out and boast about its management capability in strengthening out its finances certainly does not speak well for democracy and shows a big hole in terms of the ability of this government to structure Parliament.

I was surprised to hear the member for Kitchener say that the regional councillors didn't do their homework and that's why there were tax inequities and they failed to protect small businesses from a great number of increases. The facts are that if the latest rounds of Tory proposals, of Tory tax-fixing schemes, had not been introduced, there would have been a large number of bankruptcies all over Ontario. I am more familiar with Toronto because that's where my riding is and that's where most of my phone calls are coming from, but I can remember that at the time the first tax bill was supposed to be introduced, the municipalities said to the government and to the Minister of Finance: "Let's sit down and look at this new tax scheme, current value assessment. We're going to propose some changes and we would hope that as the province has been considered previously to be a friend to the municipalities, there would be some kind of rapport and together we could propose and even develop a new tax scheme that would be much fairer and just and equitable."

In this case, this has simply not been the case. For the members of the government, including the member for Kitchener, to stand up and say, "We provided a toolbox to the municipalities. Let them use the tools. They failed to use the tools," it is really a very strange phenomenon that the tools in the toolbox were simply not present. The toolbox was delivered with great fanfare but where were the tools themselves? As the member for Essex South so rightly indicated, there were no tools. The tools were lacking.

Now the municipalities right across Ontario are in a very strange position. They were counting on a tax flow that would obviously pay all the expenses, that would be a very good tax proposition. But now we know that when

the province came down with a big hammer and said, "Businesses, small businesses especially, are not to be charged more than 10%," the municipalities then said, "Where do we get the extra money from?" because the tax bills had already been sent out.

That alone shows that this is really a great fantasy for the province, to come up and say, "We've fixed the tax problem." This is not fixed. This is tax confusion. I dare you to stand up and tell me that this tax proposal of the province has indeed made significant changes and that there are some winners, because it seems that whatever tax bracket you talk to, whether you talk to businesses or homeowners or multiresidential owners or owners of industrial-land-based companies, none of them seem to be coming out as winners, not one.

What we find is that there are a significant number of tax increases and consequently these increases are leading to a number of bankruptcies. Right now we know that there are a great number of businesses right across the province that are unable to even meet the 10% cap. They're not able to pay. In my own city of Toronto, where most of you have already experienced the onslaught and the firestorm of residents and business owners alike against these proposals — you've all experienced these — we know by our own calculations there would have been over 9,000 bankruptcies had we not organized tax demonstrations on the streets.

Just like the province was unable, I should even say unwilling, to listen to the municipalities when the first tax scheme was proposed — they shut the door in their face. They slammed it shut and said, "No, I'm sorry, we do not wish to hear from you." They said the same thing to the city of Toronto. They slammed the door shut. "We don't want to have any discussions here. This is our proposal. We're going to pass it into law and let you demonstrate."

This is the reason why there were thousands of people on the streets, businesses and homeowners alike, demonstrating against this government, very clearly pushing the signs into Premier Harris's face and the Minister of Finance's face and saying: "Stop CVA. Stop this tax madness." Because the doors were shut to democracy even here with time allocation, because these doors were shut, there was no other avenue but to get out there and demonstrate with signs in the middle of winter. I can remember it was February. It was cold. We were out there with the signs because there was so much support from ordinary residents who also faced tax bankruptcies.

Even today the door is still shut. Even today, when you look across Toronto, there are still hundreds of people who will be unable to pay these taxes. Whether you're talking about businesses or homeowners or multi-residential people, it makes no difference; they're simply unable to pay these kinds of taxes. The bankruptcy court is the only one that's going to make some business out of it. We now know that when the doors are shut, there's no other way but to demonstrate.

The reason, I might add, why this government even gave in to the businesses, to the thousands of bankruptcies that would have taken place and to the inadequacies of the

system, which I will address myself to in a minute, was because they knew there was a firestorm brewing. They knew when there were thousands of people on the streets with signs in the middle of winter, they had better make a change, because they did not want to lose all the seats in the next election. So they hurriedly scurried around to find another tax proposal to fix the first one. That's why today we have number eight, directly related to the tax mess.

1650

When the first tax bill did not produce the desired results, when it led to bankruptcies out there, they quickly decided to do the second one. When the second one led to demonstrations, they quickly decided to do the third one. When the third one didn't fix it either, they did the fourth, the fifth, the sixth and the seventh. And after all these changes, all the capping, all these special releases, even today we have a tax mess where no one can understand this government's tax bill. So we have to fix it. The question of course is going to be, how are we going to fix it?

Is there more time? I'm turning around to my colleagues because we're supposed to be sharing some of the time here.

I just wanted to indicate that this has led to a great deal of confusion. When these taxes are now due, when they're due today, are the people in the businesses and in some of the homes owned by seniors going to have enough money to pay for them? No. That's why this province has said: "Let's do a cap. Let's do a phase-in."

Remember, the city of Toronto had put out its tax bills. They said: "Just a minute. We know this can't be straightened out, so we're going to have to introduce another tax bill." Do you know what they had to do? The August 31 deadline, which everyone in Toronto knew had to be maintained, suddenly was being postponed to October. Then October rolled around. I can remember when October 30 rolled around and the Minister of Finance stood up in this House and said: "You know what? We're going to postpone the date until December 31." Do you know why? Because ordinary Ontarians hadn't even digested what was in these tax bills.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Bad management.

Mr Ruprecht: It is just bad management. It is just not a way to fix things.

I heard the member for Kitchener say, "We had the courage to change it, because no one else was going to take it on; not the NDP and not the Liberals, just we good guys, the Conservatives." What happened in the end? The tax mess and the tax chaos is squarely set on the shoulders of the Premier and the Minister of Finance. They said they had the courage, but they didn't have the courage. They were like a bull in a china shop. The bull suddenly got into the glass and the glass door started pricking them. When those pricks of the glass start hitting their rear end, they're going to wake up. They're going to wake up even more, my friends.

Do you know when they're going to wake up? They're going to wake up when the election takes place. That's why I say to you today, I prophesy to you today, this is

one of the bills that will be the downfall of this government, because everyone out there is going to be affected by it. That will be one of the major pieces of legislation which will not be accepted by Ontarians, because it has led to chaos. This is not order and good government; this is chaos.

I say to you in closing, we have now seen what the government has proposed and what the government has produced. It doesn't work; it cannot work in the future. We say to them, "Fix it if you've got the courage," but you have not.

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Would you please check for a quorum. I'd appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, could you check for a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Wow, another time allocation motion. I think the member for Oriole mentioned it. I think it's the 30th time the government has chosen to gag and suppress democracy in this place. I don't blame them, actually, in this instance. This is so embarrassing. It's like the flounder on the back of George Purvis's fishing boat out in Georgian Bay: flop, flop, in its death throes. This particular piece of legislation is to fix the seven mistakes they've already made. Maybe we should recount where we're at in this sorry mess.

I remember, after about six tries at property tax reform in the province, Mr Eves appearing at the AMO meeting, and he said: "We're going to extend the appeal period" — Mr Danford will remember that — "to October 30. We're going to extend it to then because everything's all in a mess out there. People haven't got their assessments. We're having a real lot of difficulty so we're going to extend that to October 30, but we need those people in the opposition to agree with us to make sure that we can facilitate the quick extension of the property tax assessment to October 30 for appeals."

That's what Mr Eves said, and of course we agreed immediately because we had made that suggestion a year before, so it wasn't really very difficult. We got all prepared to facilitate the extension of the appeal period to October 30. We said, "We'll do that." Guess what? They never called the bill. Why didn't they call the bill? Because we had great-grandson or great-great-great-grandson of the original property tax bill to deal with. These guys can't shoot straight.

I have people in my constituency, in the great constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin, who have not received a tax bill. They don't know what their taxes will be for 1998. I note by the calendar that there are but 31 days left in the great year of 1998. These people don't know whether they should be appealing their assessment because it's not quite as easy as looking at the assessment rolls. As everything changes, it's a question of whether yours changed how in relation to your neighbour's. It's kind of difficult to make

a judgment about whether you should appeal your assessment until you see the tax bill. They haven't seen one, they're not likely to see one, and that puts them in a very difficult situation.

It also puts the municipalities in a hugely unfair and difficult situation because those who believe they were unfairly treated have the right to and will appeal. They will do that. But you know who appeals? The people who believe that their assessment is too high. You know who doesn't appeal? Those who believe their assessment is unfair but it's too low. They don't appeal. Never. It doesn't happen. What it means to municipalities is that many of these appeals will be successful and they will lose literally thousands upon thousands upon thousands of dollars in revenue that they believed in their 1998 budget would be there. That means, of course, that they're going to have to pick it up next year.

1700

My good friend the treasurer of Espanola, Joel MacKenzie, has pointed out that with this particular bill you will not pay any attention to the clerk-treasurers of the province of Ontario. They have said that this is unworkable. Joel says it's not only unworkable but it's hugely, bureaucratically expensive for the municipality to be put in this position. The cost of redoing the entire segment of commercial assessment that this deals with will be an unfair burden on all the people in Espanola, and frankly every other municipality that has been thrown into this particular situation, and that's most of the municipalities.

The great problem with this is that the government says: "It's not our fault. We didn't do this. Of course, we didn't do this. We gave them the tools. If they were responsible municipal leaders" — those folks, by the way, that the public voted for — "they would have figured all of this out and they would have fixed it long before that." That was somewhere in these six or seven property tax bills we've had so far. "They would have figured it out and they would have fixed it."

Well, I'll tell you, you guys had better start taking some responsibility for the mess you've put this system in. The municipal people I deal with on a regular basis make the best decisions they can make given the information they are given by this government. That information tends to change on a daily if not hourly basis from the government, and they've had tremendous problems making rational business decisions when the rules change almost by the minute.

By the way, if you go out and talk to the clerks across the province, particularly in rural Ontario, you'll find out that when they were looking at making these decisions among the categories and how they would do it, their good friends from municipal affairs, those bureaucrats who work for the government, and again in good faith, said, "This is what we suggest you do." They took the advice of the ministry bureaucrats in virtually every case. Then to come along and be accused by this group of thugs of being incompetent, of being somebody who won't do what's in the interests of their own ratepayers, I just cannot countenance how you could say that.

Interjection.

Mr Michael Brown: It's true.

This is just an example of mistake after mistake after mistake. Especially the people in the rural caucus over there would appreciate the fact that now the government, or at least one of your backbenchers —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma-Manitoulin, I believe you just a minute ago said something unparliamentary.

Mr Michael Brown: What was that, Madam Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: I'm not going to repeat it. You know what you said. I'd like you to withdraw it, please.

Mr Michael Brown: If I said something that offended, I withdraw that.

Mr Crozier: Use the word "bullies." They're just bullies.

Mr Michael Brown: They're a group of bullies.

Volunteer fire departments in this province have a huge problem because of the way, I think it was Bill 99 addressed the old workers' compensation and now the WSIB premiums. It's a big problem for the volunteer firefighters all across Ontario. Stupid. They just didn't think about it.

I'm getting letters from people involved in 4-H clubs that you're trying to withdraw the funding for 4-H clubs — it's incomprehensible — mostly I think because of oversight, at least I hope so.

Anyway, you've got the \$47 million out there in the ads, telling us all how great you are —

Mr Bradley: Fifty million now.

Mr Michael Brown: How much now?

Mr Bradley: Fifty million.

Mr Michael Brown: Up to \$50 million. I did hear two new commercials on the weekend. They're telling you how wonderful they are, or trying to tell the people, but the problem is that the reality is not the same as the advertising and the people of Ontario have figured all of that out. The member for St Catharines is about to follow.

Mr Bradley: I lament the fact that once again we're dealing with what's called a time allocation motion, a motion which closes off debate on an important piece of legislation before this House. I think the real reason we see this time allocation motion, and this is just my guess at it, is that they want to cut off hearings. There were going to be some public hearings where the clerks and treasurers of Ontario, a neutral, non-partisan group, wanted to make representation. In fact, I know the regional governments wanted to make some representations, the regional chairs around this province.

The government didn't want the embarrassment of public input, because when you have public input from various segments of society, particularly the municipal governments, which are directly affected by this, it can be embarrassing to the government. That's really what this time allocation motion is about.

I suspect this debate would have ended rather quickly. In fact, we were going to go to those public hearings I think Thursday of this week. People were priming for that. They were getting ready. They wanted to put their case forward. The government would have none of that, be-

cause of course the news media and others would be aware of the fact that they were being denied this opportunity. They would be pointing out, as they would, that the real winners overall are the bank towers in downtown Toronto.

You see, what happened was that when Mike Harris decided he was going to change the Assessment Act in the province of Ontario, he said, "Let's give more money to the bank towers," the huge bank towers in downtown Toronto. He said: "They're over-assessed and those big-box retail outlets are way over-assessed. It's time we zapped it to the small business people." Of course the small business people are affected by this.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: That must be what's going on in his mind. I want to say to the member for Oxford that he probably didn't say that, but that's what's going on in his mind. I'm glad he corrected me. I'm always glad to get helped out by my friend from western Ontario, because he wants to make sure I'm saying exactly the right thing.

I think what went on in his mind is: "These bank towers and the big-box businesses are over-assessed. They need help." As a result, the small business people get zapped by the changes to the Assessment Act.

Now, he didn't want this to happen all at once just before the election, because all those small business people out there were saying, "We thought Mike Harris said he was the friend of small business, but he's zapping us, whacking us," as the member for Fort York would say, "with these higher property taxes" — for two reasons, as my friend from Etobicoke-Humber would know.

The first reason is all of the downloading of responsibilities. Mike Harris said: "Let's have an exchange of responsibilities with the municipalities. We will give them some responsibilities and we take some back." A lot of people said, "That would be a fair exchange." That's what a lot of people thought initially, until they found out, as they did in Niagara, that it was a bogus exchange. In fact what happened was that the responsibilities given to the municipalities were far more financially onerous than the responsibilities that were taken by the Mike Harris government to the provincial level. For instance, in Niagara, as my good friend from Niagara-on-the-Lake would know, they're \$18 million short; in other words, after the exchange, the Niagara region —

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Niagara-on-the-Lake knows how to —

Mr Bradley: I'm glad the member mentioned that. I think interjections should be allowed, because it allows me to go into a new field of endeavour.

What happened in our area, because we have a regional government, was that the downloading went to the regional government. It didn't go so much to the local municipalities. What happened was that the regional government got saddled with this.

1710

Mr Froese: The downloading went to the taxpayer.

Mr Bradley: My good friend the former Conservative member for St Catharines-Brock, Peter Partington — he's

a former Conservative member in this House, a good friend of Norm Sterling and a good fellow. I hope he's not running for the Tory nomination, because I've said he's a good fellow. But what he said was that it's the provincial government's fault. He tried his best. He was the chair of the finance committee. There was Peter working very hard to pare down the budget as much as possible without totally annihilating all the services provided by the region. Peter worked really hard and brought in that budget and he had shots being fired at him from the operatives for the Conservative Party in the area, who said —

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): He didn't reduce the services.

Mr Bradley: They did. The question was, were services reduced? In fact they were, unfortunately, so we got the worst of all worlds. Not only did they have to raise the property tax to make up for Mike Harris's dumping on them, but they also had to cut services, the worst combination of all, or impose user fees.

My friend from Oxford knows that for the rich and powerful, user fees are fine; they can afford them. But for people of modest income, user fees are extremely onerous. I happen to know this government has raised taxes — you know how they say they haven't raised taxes? They've raised taxes — what was the last figure I had? — 489 times. You know how that is? People will ask: "What taxes are those? Is that the health tax they put on that they don't talk about?" "No," I say, "It's not the health tax. It's all these user fees."

I remember that Mike Harris said: "You know something? A user fee is a tax." Well, if a user fee is a tax, you know then that 489 new taxes or tax increases have taken place since this government has been in power.

Even the so-called red tape bill that we voted on this afternoon contained new or increased user fees for people in this province. That's one of the reasons we opposed it, outside of the fact that it also put the fox in charge of the henhouse in many areas of the government where that shouldn't be the case. That's why we opposed it.

I see the purpose of this time allocation motion. I don't agree with it, but I see the purpose. The purpose is to not allow people to make public representations. The Minister of Finance, Mr Eves, said today in the House in answer to a question from Gerry Phillips, the Liberal finance critic, "We're meeting with AMO." What you have to know, of course, is that that meeting was behind closed doors. Reporters couldn't go to that, the free press out there couldn't go to that, the public couldn't have access to it by having it in a committee, and it wouldn't be in Hansard so we could send out the Hansard and show what the government responded to it, even though I should tell you, Madam Speaker — you probably know this — that this government has essentially ended written Hansard. Now you have to own a computer — as though everybody in the province has a computer — to get the Hansard. I know lots of people who don't have a computer at their house and they used to take Hansard on a subscription basis. They can't get that any more, and that's lamentable, to say the least.

How many bills is this? Who in the House is going to help me out?

Mr Crozier: Seven or eight.

Mr Bradley: Seven or eight. Some people say eight. I'm going to be nice to the government. I'll say it's only seven bills, seven different bills to try to deal with this. This is the bunch that says they're competent managers, yet they've had seven different bills presented in this House dealing with the issue of property taxes. Each bill is there to correct that bungling found in the previous bill. I've had people say to me: "Whether I agreed or disagreed with the Conservative government, I always thought they were competent. But now I look, and it has taken them seven or eight bills to try to fix this particular problem." And then the last bill they got, they want to rush it through. I can remember in committee when opposition members moved motions that said we should extend the deadline for the purpose of appealing property taxes considerably. "Oh," the government members said, "we can't do that." Well, one of the provisions in this bill is that that extension now is to the end of this year because they have bungled so badly.

Municipalities don't know what to do with this now. They didn't know whether to send out early bills or late bills. They have to keep sending these bills out several times. They know what's going to happen. They know the bank towers are the winners. They know that the big-box companies that compete with small businesses in our communities, and put them out of business sometimes, are the winners.

So Mike Harris says: "Well, we'd better make sure this doesn't all come before the election. Let's phase it in." Instead of giving them their arsenic all at once, they give them their arsenic a little bit at a time. Ultimately it's going to have a pretty devastating effect on small business.

I can remember my colleague from Parkdale marching with the people in his end of Metropolitan Toronto, his end of the city, where there was a riot taking place, almost — that's too strong a word, but at least a very strong protest taking place against the Mike Harris government for the property tax imposition that was taking place.

What they want to do now is phase it in, and most small businesses are saying, "Gee whiz, if we have to get it phased in, I guess that's better than getting it all at once, but what we'd rather have is that you leave it on the bank towers and the big box commercial operations and not hit us with it, Mike." That's what they're saying. That's not going to happen, unfortunately, because this government is bound and determined it's going to move ahead.

The whole strategy surrounding this, by the way, in case members of the House don't know this, was to blame the local government, blame municipal government for the downloading. The other day the member for Haldimand-Norfolk had a bill in the House. I thought, "Is this bill really to do with the structure of government?" Then I found out the battle is over who caused the increase in property taxes, particularly where there's a large agricultural base. That's what it's all about: Blame the region,

the municipal government, when in fact Mike Harris is to blame.

If I had the jar of — what is it he has? — toonies or loonies or whatever he has; he brings them out as a prop because Mike Murphy, the American consultant on political strategy, said this is a good —

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Don't pick on the cousins. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Mr Bradley: My friend from Etobicoke-Humber will know that Mike Murphy was the guy who ran the campaign for Ollie North for the Senate in Virginia, and Senator Jesse Helms, two great friends of Canada, I might add, ha, ha.

He probably said to Mike, "You know, the good thing is, just blame the local people." That's what happened in New Jersey. You remember that the Republican Governor of New Jersey cut the state income tax by 30% and dumped it all on to the municipalities and the property taxes went way up.

Mr Baird: She got re-elected, though, Jim.

Mr Bradley: She came very close to being defeated. In fact, it was alleged that had the Democratic Party run a strong candidate for Governor of New Jersey, they would have been elected. But here it is, we have a situation, here the people are voting strategically —

Mr Baird: They may allege that here too, Jim. They may say the same thing.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, member for Nepean.

Mr Bradley: They're voting strategically. I was listening to Buzz Hargrove, head of the CAW, on the radio the other day. He said: "We're going to vote strategically. We've got to get rid of the Harris government." I won't get into that too much. But I just want to say that the same thing happened, my friend from Fort York will know, in New Jersey and they tried to blame the local level of government.

The local Tory members wanted to take on the regional chairs everywhere. They had a couple of allies on regional council, but my friend and the former Progressive Conservative member of provincial Parliament for St Catharines-Brock, the chair of the finance committee, Peter Partington, and a good friend of Norm Sterling, said it right. He said the blame lies with the Mike Harris government. People like Peter Partington probably would not recognize —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Scarborough East, come to order.

1720

Mr Bradley: People like Peter Partington probably would not recognize the present Conservative government, because back when he was with the Conservatives they were a moderate party, an all-encompassing party, one which understood all aspects of Ontario.

Mr Froese: That's not what you said when they were in power.

Mr Bradley: Naturally, I drew to the attention of the public in those days what I felt were the shortcomings of

the government, but I never thought they were ideologically driven. I hear Conservatives, day after day, say to me: "This isn't the Conservative Party we knew. This isn't the Conservative Party which recognizes the importance of the local level of government. This isn't the Conservative Party that was a middle-of-the-road, genuinely Progressive Conservative Party. This is the Reform Party." That's what they say to me, and these are moderate Conservatives. These are former members of the Legislature who tell me this from time to time. They don't recognize the party any more.

We know what this is all about. This motion is once again slamming the door shut on debate in this Legislature, and I think the people of this province will not forget that about Mike Harris.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: I'm happy —

Mr Baird: Hey, Rosie, is there a quorum?

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese: Call for a quorum any time you like. I think it's important for people to be here to listen to this speech, because I've got a lot to say and this is a live show. People should tune in to the things we've got to say.

This is a time allocation motion. It's a motion intended to throttle — picture that — debate on important issues that are before this place. It's like they continually have their hands on our throats, on the throat of debate in this House, strangling it like a bottle, getting thinner and thinner each and every time.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Stop it, stop it.

Mr Marchese: But it's true, member for Lake Nipigon.

Speaker, I want to say I'll be sharing my time with the members for Lake Nipigon, Sudbury East and Dovercourt, should they desire. They will indicate to me when that appropriate moment will come and I will yield the floor to them, obviously, because they have a lot to say too.

That's the problem when they throttle debate. It only permits one or two speakers, and the other speakers, who have so much to say, will have to limit themselves to a few short comments.

Mr Gilchrist: Did you see this number, your time allocations? There were 32 of them.

Mr Marchese: The member from Scarborough, my good buddy from Scarborough, is one who will never miss a fight anywhere to defend this government. I've got to tell you, you're a good defender of this government, one of the few fine soldiers this government has. While others skulk away, there you are in the front, sword in hand, ready to do battle with the opposition. You're a firm fundamentalist of the Conservative religion.

Mr Gilchrist: You do what you can.

Mr Marchese: I know, and I praise you, because as I say, I see you often in those debates, where others would, in a most reptilian way, just skulk away, but not you.

I've got a lot to say, and I want to try to get into this discussion. First of all, I want to speak briefly — because there is so much to say — to the number of bills this government has introduced to deal with the whole matter of

the Ontario property tax system and the download, by and large. Is that a fair thing to say? Seven or eight, give or take, but about eight bills, more or less, to deal with this issue.

I happen to be one who believes that this is a matter of incompetence. Others who are a little more generous would say it is a matter of complexity, that there are complex issues so we need to be generous and give this government as much time as they need to get it right. I don't want to be that generous, because I recall when we were in government we took some blows early on. You remember, member for Lake Nipigon? Almost immediately, as we got into power, we were accused of incompetence over little things.

Mr Ford: You were. You're telling the truth.

Laughter.

Mr Marchese: I want to be fair. I accept the laughter on the other side is genuine and meaning something. I accept that. But, Speaker, you have been here in this place over the last four years, more or less, and you have witnessed and spoken against so many incompetencies of this government that we gasp in disbelief, and they continue to give us more and more incompetence as we go on.

That's why, I've got to tell you, they're going to call an early election, because they can't continue mismanaging their policy affairs. They can't. The more they introduce bills, the more they get into trouble. Bless them, they haven't been accused of incompetence, as some others, but I think this is a matter of true incompetence — not a matter of complexity whatsoever, although I admit the issue of property tax reform is something you've got to do carefully, and not something you'll want to rush through.

You'll recall, they reassessed 3.5 million properties in more or less a year and a half. What does it mean? That they didn't assess them properly. That's why we have a whole whack of buildings and a whole lot of people out there complaining about the assessment of their property: because they didn't do it right. They didn't have the human resources to do it right. They bungled it right from the very beginning in their haste and, I would argue, incompetence, to do this job.

How many bills have they introduced? Bill 106, introduced January 16, 1997; that's when they started with their incompetence. They continue, of course, to this very day, and it will continue again, because there are new additions, new amendments, because as they go along they realize: "Oops, there are more mistakes. We didn't think of it." That's why a government needs to be a little, somewhat intelligent in terms of how they do things, to respect themselves and the public that has to suffer these problems.

It began 23 months ago with the Fair Municipal Finance Act, and the saga continues. We have, following Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act (No 2). That was Bill 149 that followed. Then there was Bill 160, which we all remember, centralized education financing. It set this province-wide levy for education. They continued because there were mistakes there. They didn't take education off the commercial-industrial assessment whatsoever. The

province took all of it. That was followed by Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, where they set down the rules for the Assessment Review Board. Then there's Bill 179 — oh yes, that corrects some of the rules of the Assessment Review Board.

Do you get a feeling of what I'm saying? The terms of the bills, the introduction of a new one to correct the old problem. Then it continues with Bill 15, the Tax Cuts for People and for Small Business Act, followed right on the heels by Bill 16, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act, continuing with Bill 61, to extend the property tax appeal deadline to at least give property taxpayers the time to file an appeal; and then of course we've got Bill 79.

I just wanted to go through that for the benefit of those who always enjoy a big laugh on the other side. But this is not for them, I always argue; it's for the people listening to the debate. They don't need to get into the minutiae of details. They don't really need that. They need the larger picture, to get a sense of what this government is all about. We could spend hours on each bill, but what the public needs is the larger picture of incompetence. Within that framework, they will understand what we're dealing with. Had they done this thing right, we would have had one bill, with the time it takes to consult properly and make all the necessary corrections and/or additions or adjustments that need to be made. But they didn't do that.

This is a government that is omnipotent in its style of operation. They claim to be omniscient, but you can see the failure of omniscience, because we have a succession of bill after bill to correct the previous ones, giving you, dear public, the clue that these guys don't know what they are doing.

1730

We have the tales from my good friend from Nepean talking about — quite apart from this bill — how he and his friends have set this climate. Where I picked up his conversation, he was talking about how the housing starts are growing, how there are a whole lot of housing starts, to indicate that the economy's booming. On the whole matter of housing starts, those people who can afford a house are few and far between. They have the money to be able to take advantage of low interest rates to buy a home. But many of the people, Speaker, who you and I deal with in our downtown ridings don't have the money for a home. Many of them are homeless and 100,000 across Ontario are on waiting lists for subsidies because they can't afford the prices that are there to get into the rental market that's available.

The Minister of Housing answered the questions today, and all the folks out there were able to see the competent manner in which he was able to handle them. Many who were watching will realize that he doesn't answer the questions very well, or at all. I said to him, you boys don't want to build housing. The Common Sense Revolution told us that and you delivered on that promise.

But there was another promise, I believe on page 13, that spoke about shelter allowances so as to permit people to be able to find homes. I said to the Minister of Housing

today: "Will you deliver on that promise? You have kept other promises, you argue, and this was an important promise to deal with the issue of homelessness and to deal with people who are on waiting lists because they need subsidies?" We said, "Will you deliver on your promise to give shelters to these people?" I'm not one to advocate for shelter allowances. I believe it's fundamentally wrong, but they say that is the answer to the issue of home and shelter problems that people are facing in this province. They haven't delivered on that.

The member for Nepean can talk about housing starts and the member for Nepean can gloat about all these people who are buying them up, but it's the upper middle classes that are able to afford these kinds of homes. The rest of the folks are wallowing in their dismal conditions as they wait for better times to come. If these are not the better times, when will we have a better time?

We've had the healthiest of economies in the last three and a half years, not created by the federal Liberals, not created by these fine Tories here, but lucky enough to find a healthy economy and yet we have a disparity between the rich and the poor that we have never seen before. We used to have good values, an ethic of sharing in our communities, across the province and across Canada. Those values and the ethics of what binds each other is being slowly unglued by people like them.

We have Mr Ford, the member from Etobicoke, who keeps on smirking and laughing and I'm happy that he will have the opportunity, now that he lost the nomination to the Speaker, to have the time to go in his riding and meet the real people of Etobicoke.

Mr Wettlaufer: That's inappropriate. Come on.

Mr Marchese: Member from Kitchener, it's very appropriate. He will have the time to go and talk to the real good people of Etobicoke.

Let me tell you a bit about the rich and the poor —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Marchese: — and the disparity between them.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese: In 1973 the richest 10% of Canadian families earned 21 times more than the poorest 10%. Not bad. What it means is that people at the bottom were able to share in the prosperity of the country in a way that the middle class flourished in between. But that number, the middle class, is slowly disappearing, as I read to you another statistic, which says that in 1996 the income gap had widened so much that the richest 10% of families made an incredible 314 times more than the poorest 10%. Do you see the enormous gap? We're talking about a gap between the rich and the poor at a time when the economy is, as they say, the healthiest we have seen in a long time, under their tutelage, yet the divide is pretty large. It's egregious, something that I think we need to worry about.

The economist, the author of this report, Armine Yalchian, obviously has given us the tools to be able to talk to people, as we talk to you today, but we need to deal with these problems. This same economist points out, for example, that at a time when worker wages are still lag-

ging behind the cost of living, the 100 top CEOs in Canada collected an average pay increase last year of 56%. People are working harder, longer, for less. The middle class is disappearing. CEOs' average pay increase last year was 56%.

What do these fine Tories have to offer? Oh, an income tax cut worth \$6 billion. I'm not talking \$6.

Mr Wettlaufer: Over 440,000 jobs.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Kitchener, come to order.

Mr Marchese: I'm talking about \$6 billion worth of income tax cuts. Speaker, I'll remind you and the listeners that 6% of this entire Ontario working population —

Mr Wettlaufer: That's right, you'd rather have grants —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kitchener, come to order.

Mr Marchese: — is earning 25% of that tax cut. It's almost \$2 billion. I know you will agree with me that is obscene. It is obscene, \$2 billion out of \$6 billion. Remember, this isn't money that the government has in this pocket to give out to people generously, as they do. When they give this money out of this pocket, they've got to get it out of another pocket. That pocket is the health care pocket, the housing pocket, the social service pocket, the education pocket. That's where they're getting it.

You know something else? Most obscene of all is that many of these affluent individuals, the ones getting the big bucks from the tax cut these guys are giving, are leading the charge for the tax cuts, they're leading the bandwagon where the public sees public services as luxuries, not as something that binds us together, that we need as part of who we are, as part of our humanity. They argue we can't afford them. They also argue that the poor must make a greater effort to do more for themselves. These are the affluent.

These are the buddies of these guys here, who sit around and oftentimes smile at the comments we make, and sometimes take offence at the things we say, but if we don't speak about these things, who will? If we don't speak about the fact that the affluent, who are the ones who are saying that the cuts to welfare, and maybe employment insurance, because I'm not sure they like that, but I don't know — the 21% cut to welfare in their view is a good thing. In the view of Tories, it's a good thing. To listen to my good buddy here on my left, the member for Kitchener, all he does, every other word, is about business, the member for Nepean too and the member for York-Mackenzie. All they speak about is business.

1740

All I hear from the little guy in my riding is, "What about me?" These guys say, "We want to help business because there will be a trickle-down effect so that the poor and those who don't have jobs will get jobs." The people at the bottom are saying: "I don't have a job. I am working harder and longer for less." The people at the bottom are saying, "It's all very nice for you people to talk about small business, but where do I fit in that picture? What about me?"

I agree with that, because if we don't worry about these things, my sense is that nobody else is going to worry about them.

Apart from this mess that these people have created in attempting to fix, through their tax reform, this property tax system, they have massacred municipal politicians, municipal services and massacred the homeowner and the tenants, who pay a whole heap of taxes as well. This so-called download that was supposed to have been an equal swap wasn't so equal at all.

Toronto council received 50 million bucks — the generosity of this government — as a grant, they received \$100 million as a loan and another \$100 million as a loan, and the municipality of Toronto says, "We've got a \$150-million debt." This, from a government that said it was an even swap. It was not an even swap. They have serious economic problems because they can't meet their social commitments with the money they've got and with the money they're getting from this province. It was never an even swap, but these guys want their money repaid, they say.

What it means to the municipality is that they had to fire 1,200 last year and they're firing 1,200 this year and Mel Lastman says we had savings of \$175 million as a result. He calls the firings savings. People are gone from permanent positions and he calls them savings. I don't think they're savings when you fire people, because these poor folks are going to have to go out there and find a job in a market that's getting uglier and uglier.

The member for Nepean quotes somebody or other as saying the economy will continue to boom. I'm worried about this economy, because it will go down, and I'm worried about the health care system. Talking about Riverdale, Speaker, you know the kinds of problems we face there. "What Riverdale also demonstrates is that those nearing a certain age and needing what age often requires — chronic care, home care, long-term care, nursing home care — should mind their pennies and credit cards," says the Toronto Star in one of its editorials. If they don't have the money, under what's happening with this government, they are in a whole heap of trouble.

They go on:

"That is because long-term care is not just hospital care by another name. Patients who move out of institutions like Riverdale are likely to end up in private facilities" — not a public facility but a private facility.

"That means moving from medicare to partially insured care."

This is big stuff. The implications of these changes on the public good are enormous.

"It means moving from public hospitals, which are subject to the standards of accessibility and universality in the health act, to institutions that are for the most part outside of medicare."

Speaker, I know you're very concerned, because we talk about it. You've got Riverdale right in your backyard, and I know how concerned those people are. You've told me about that. You've tried to tell the Tories about your

concerns, and the public, and they need to worry. I'm worried.

"It means going from Ontario's hospital insurance act, which pays for prescribed drugs, to a system where medication may have to come out of a patient's pension cheque."

Do you see how all these changes are eating at the poor, all our public services that we value, ethics and values that were important to us, that these people are slowly eroding, taking the planks out one by one? This tax system here is a matter of sheer, gross, indecent, egregious incompetence. And it's getting worse.

We'll see more bills to deal with previous bills that have caused all these problems. It will not be corrected. More and more people are going to have to bear the burden of these tax increases. Businesses were protected here, and quite rightfully, I would argue, but homeowners are going to be stuck with a bill of higher taxes or the loss of a lot of services.

My friends do want to speak to this, so I would yield the floor the member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Pouliot: It's like music to my ears when I listen to my distinguished colleague, one of the best orators in this town when it comes time to convey to the people of Ontario and to try to impress on the government of the day what's wrong with the issues they are presenting with their bills. Rosario Marchese, I wish to thank you on behalf of the people of northern Ontario. We get phone calls in our office; we get mail from people saying: "You know, the fellow — I think he lives in Toronto, a long-time sitting member. He is passionate, he is committed." Through him I see the human dimension."

We listen to him, my spouse and I. When Rosario Marchese is on his feet defending our rights, we raise the volume. There are others with whom we change channels quickly, because they are responsible for the situation that we find ourselves or are about to find ourselves in.

I want to share a secret with you, a belief that I held for some years. If you promise not to tell anyone, Speaker, we can do this together. Many years ago, when I was little, when I was beginning to learn about politics, although I didn't agree with the philosophy, with the policies of governments of the right, I believed that at least I could rely on their competence, that those people were in the know. They could count. They all went to the same "privileged" school, a school for good young men and good young women. They came up with the savoir-faire; they knew better than anyone. They were very competent in leading us.

After 14 years in this assembly — and Mr Kormos, who is exchanging the same philosophy at present, as I speak, with our great House leader, would attest to that — nothing could be further from the truth. In 14 years, I've never faced such gross incompetence. These people screw up, they mess up, and then they do it again and again and again. You would think that after the first, second, third or fourth time, one would begin to get it right, to get the transmission back. They worked seven times on the bill on property taxation, each and every time to correct the mis-

akes made in the previous bill. But those soldiers are never wrong.

I work with a certain component, a certain element of the brigade who would never admit they're wrong; they never make any mistakes. When you see some old films of revolutions and the train is about to leave the station and they're all massed there, they are members of the first brigade. They have quite a few of them. They're not Conservatives, mind you; they're conscripts. They come from the Reform, to swell the ranks, so the few generals can ride the limo. Those Reform members are never wrong. They profess such a zeal. If Mike Harris told them, "You go deliver this message. Members of the brigade, line up, get off the platform. You're going over that hill," they would all go over the hill, no questions asked. They wouldn't even remove the blinkers. Historically, they speak very highly of members of the first brigade, for they're all dead, dead, dead.

I was wrong when I believed many years ago that if you were a Conservative, you brought forward some competence. They have messed things up big time. If only it were not consequential, if it didn't matter too much.

1750

Have you noticed in your neighbourhood in the past few years that the middle class, the people who carry the freight, who pay for all that, are not as happy as they were, that they're more anxious, more concerned?

Mr Wildman: They've been abandoned by this government.

Mr Pouliot: My friend from Algoma, my neighbour and our House leader, says they've been abandoned, and eroded. There are fewer of them because we have a winner-take-all economy. The referees have left the marketplace. They've been taken out because they slow things down, they check things.

They rake it in. The president of a corporation who used to make 20 or 25 times more than the floor sweeper who provides just as essential a service now makes 250 or 300 times more. Those people only wear one set of clothes at a time. They can only consume and digest one meal at a time, watch one television set, drive one set of wheels, except that the brigade has put those people on a pedestal. They have become the role models, something we can all aspire to.

In the meantime there is less money for the middle class and, alas, for those marginalized, those less fortunate, the homeless you will see tonight on your way home, people without shelter, people without hope. The food banks are going empty before Christmas. Oh, sure, they'll get an injection. They will clean their conscience. They'll drop a few cans of tuna in the bin at those high-rise apartments and they will say, "You see, who says I don't have a heart?"

In the meantime, with the stroke of a pen, if you're on welfare, temporarily unable to join the mainstream, if Alma, a welfare recipient with two children, gets overpaid by \$5 after having been cut by 21.6%, well, the crime commissioner will come calling. He will lead the parade and be there full-time, because Alma has to give the \$5

back. In the meantime, while Alma is under a state of siege, the people in the SkyDome have just blown half a billion dollars. But they're not welfare recipients. They wear Guccis. Alma has Gucci feet but she cannot afford the shoes. She's the salt of the earth. Other people have no Gucci feet but they have Gucci shoes. There's an imbalance here: 21.6%, while the Peter Pocklington's of this world located in Ontario are picking the pockets of consumers.

I see that the minister responsible for social assistance is here. She knows about the homeless. She can see through the privacy glass of the limousine. It's inescapable; there are so many. In fact tonight there are more than double what there were previously.

The shelters, the cheap motels are full, people are in sleeping bags, yet three steps away, three blocks away, three miles away, you see some mansions that are 5,000, 8,000, 10,000 square feet, occupied by one or two people. I'm not saying it's unfair, but if it goes unchecked, you're not giving people a chance. There is only so much money in the system.

Every time we want to talk about that, because it doesn't sound too good — we feel uncomfortable; we pretend we're busy shuffling paper — they invoke closure. They say: "We've heard enough. You have two hours to debate. We'll talk about selling the 407. That's mortar. We can talk for three days about that. But don't bring the case of Alma and the two children; it's embarrassing. It doesn't sell very well: "Why doesn't she get off the streets and on to her own two feet?" because maybe I did it. But the circumstances are different. She needs not the back of a hand but a hand.

This is civilization. This is a very rich territory. We're reminded every day of how well we've done, that this has been a recovery of unprecedented proportions. Yet when I go to not only the boulevards and the streets with a prominent address and the name of some people where the name is the address, but I look and I listen to the greater population, there is a malaise there. The malaise is not the lack of money at any given time. The malaise is that they cannot look to the future with the same confidence as before; hence the despair, hence the lack of hope. That's much more dangerous, because if this kind of climate is allowed, is encouraged, in this kind of "casino winner take all," you will do so at your own peril. There is nothing worse, after all the mergers and the takeovers, than to have a young educated male and female workforce on the dole. The library abounds with examples. History repeats itself. We should know better, but we can only know better if we listen.

Have the courage. It's not a big departure from form. It is only good economics; it is only commonsensical. Seventy per cent of our economy is not based on riches but is based on consumer products. It's the economy; it's the cash flow. You don't need to emanate from any renowned school of economics to understand that. You read, you listen, you go to the marketplace. Mr Ford, you know that. You study consumer products. You fly to quality, something which is durable, and you can't go wrong.

Madam, one more time. My colleague before me talked about the need for a member to express the feelings, the aspirations of the people. I've said it before: We're being shackled. We are being strangled. The opposition is being silenced. The press has stopped printing so that the train can go to one more station in their ill-fated evolution of "The winner takes all," where ordinary people and where the marginalized will not have the same opportunity. That's the anxiety, and anxiety leads to fear.

The opposition, certainly the New Democratic Party, wants to put these on the record, to say, "Beware." If not catastrophic, if not irreversible at this time, it is coming. Their plan as they move up the food chain includes you and leaves you. This is not by accident. This is the design of the plan. So we're speaking up. Madam, I want to thank you.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I'd like to thank my colleague from Lake Nipigon for the time that he has left me and to say in the two minutes that you will recall, Madam Speaker, that if it's Monday, it must be closure motion day. You've been here on the last number of Mondays when the government has used its majority to shut down debate on important bills. We saw on October 26, a Monday, the government moving time allocation for Bill 68. We saw on November 2 the government moving time allocation on privatization of Highway 407. Here we are again today, Monday, the government moving time allocation on Bill 79.

I can understand why the government wants to do that, because it must be oh, so embarrassing for this government to be dealing with bill number seven to try and fix the mess that it's created since the beginning of January 1997 with respect to property tax reform. Imagine, we are dealing with the seventh bill to try and fix all of the mess that this government has created in trying to, so-called, allegedly, reform property taxes.

Do you know what's even more interesting? The government has to move this into committee because the government forgot, even in this, the seventh bill, another piece, that is, the cap on multi-residential units. So the government has to go to committee again on this bill to fix yet another mess.

This is a fiasco. You are totally incompetent. You must be completely embarrassed by the pathetic way you have dealt with all these bills — seven bills, and now this going to committee again to fix yet another mistake. No wonder the government is here today trying to shut this down, trying to use their jackboot tactics once again to close

debate, because they are so incompetent, and this bill is proof of that.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Tsubouchi has moved government notice of motion number 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

Those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1801 to 1806.

The Acting Speaker: Members take their seats, please.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bassett, Isabel
Beaubien, Marcel
Boushy, Dave
Chudleigh, Ted
Clement, Tony
Cunningham, Dianne
Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.

Fox, Gary
Froese, Tom
Gilchrist, Steve
Grimmett, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie
Hamick, Charles
Harris, Michael D.
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, David
Jordan, W. Leo
Kells, Morley
Leach, Al
Maves, Bart
McLean, Allan K.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Parker, John L.
Pettit, Trevor
Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Shea, Derwyn
Skarica, Toni
Smith, Bruce
Snobelen, John
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please stand one at a time.

Nays

Boyd, Marion
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Christopherson, David
Crozier, Bruce
Hoy, Pat
Kormos, Peter

Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Lessard, Wayne
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
McLeod, Lyn
Morin, Gilles E.

Phillips, Gerry
Pouliot, Gilles
Pupatello, Sandra
Ruprecht, Tony
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 51; the nays are 19.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1809.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

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Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
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Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
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		Yorkview	
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 30 November 1998

Lundi 30 novembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 November 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 novembre 1998

The House met at 1832.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CREDITS AND REVENUE PROTECTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LES CRÉDITS D'IMPÔT ET LA PROTECTION DES RECETTES

Mr Young, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 81, An Act to implement tax credits and revenue protection measures contained in the 1998 budget, to make amendments to other statutes and to enact a new statute / *Projet de loi 81, Loi visant à mettre en œuvre des crédits d'impôt et des mesures de protection des recettes contenus dans le budget de 1998, à modifier d'autres lois et à en édicter une nouvelle.*

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): I wish to share my time with the members for Durham East and Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Thank you.

Mr Young: It's my pleasure at second reading to summarize for the House the measures contained in Bill 81, the Tax Credits and Revenue Protection Act, 1998.

With this bill, as Minister Eves said at first reading, our government is exceeding the commitments we made in the budget last May. We've listened to the ideas and recommendations of Ontarians and made changes to improve many budget initiatives. With this bill, the total number of tax deductions brought to individuals and businesses in Ontario by the government thus far will be 67 — and that's thus far.

The tax credits introduced in this bill will benefit working families and Ontarians with disabilities. Tax credits will make more capital available to businesses, especially small businesses, in communities throughout Ontario, enabling them to grow and to create jobs. Special credits will help to create well-paying jobs in the new economy: industries like digital imaging, computer animation and special effects. Tax credits will help the sound recording industry, which is the single biggest promoter of new Canadian musical talent.

To further support job creation, the bill implements the acceleration of the \$400,000 exemption from the employer

health tax. For 1998, the exemption for employers and self-employed individuals is increased from \$300,000 to \$350,000. On the revenue protection side, the bill contains a number of provisions to improve compliance with tax legislation and to motivate individuals and corporations to meet their tax obligations. The bill also enacts a new act to replace the fees charged by the province on grants of probate or administration of estates and maintain revenue at current levels.

We're giving help to working families. Measures in this bill will help parents get, and keep, jobs while ensuring that their young children are well looked after, both by reimbursing parents for part of their costs and by encouraging construction and renovation of licensed child care spaces. Forty million dollars from the existing child care tax credit will be combined with an additional \$100 million in 1998-99 to create a new program that supports 350,000 young children in working families.

Under this program, modest- and middle-income working families will receive a new Ontario child care supplement for working families of up \$1,020 per year for each child under age seven. This legislation will provide benefits that accrued from July 1, 1998. It is expected that some 210,000 families will benefit. The supplement will be available to low- and middle-income Ontario families who are working, attending school or receiving job training and who receive the Canada child tax benefit for their children under the age of seven.

The supplement is calculated as the greater of a designated percentage of family-earned income in excess of \$5,000 and 50% of eligible child care expenses, up to a maximum of \$1,020 per year for each child under age seven. The supplement is reduced by 8% of family net income in excess of \$20,000.

The supplement may also be reduced if the family receives a child care fee subsidy funded by Ontario. For example, eligibility for the program disappears at a net family income of \$32,750 for families with one child under age seven, at \$45,500 for families with two children under age seven and at \$58,250 for families with three children under age seven.

The first payment will be made following royal assent. If royal assent is in December 1998, a lump sum payment will be made for the period July 1998 to December 1998. Starting January 1999, the supplement will be paid monthly. The monthly payments will be made directly by the province to the parent and not through the annual income tax return. Individuals will apply annually to the province to determine their eligibility.

This legislation will increase the access of working parents to affordable child care by providing a new tax incentive to businesses that create or improve licensed child care facilities or that make contributions to child care operators to construct or renovate facilities. This initiative was announced in the 1998 Ontario budget to support businesses that create additional licensed child care facilities in Ontario.

The workplace child care tax incentive would provide corporations with an additional 30% deduction from Ontario income for capital costs of construction or renovation of licensed child care facilities in Ontario incurred after May 5, 1998. This incentive would also be available for contributions of cash, property or services by corporations to child care operators if the contribution is used by the operator for this purpose. Capital costs for playground equipment would also qualify. A 5% refundable tax credit would be available to unincorporated businesses with qualifying expenses.

The child care initiatives introduced by this government are expected to triple the number of children who benefit from child care assistance, to an estimated 450,000 children.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): How many?

Mr Young: An estimated 450,000 children.

This legislation is a companion piece to the government's historic Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which was introduced on Monday, November 23, the same day as this bill. Our bill provides positive fiscal measures to encourage and facilitate the participation of Ontarians with disabilities in the social and economic life of the province.

To support businesses that hire employees with disabilities, the workplace accessibility tax incentive would provide an additional 100% deduction for qualifying expenditures incurred to accommodate an eligible person with a disability in their job function. A 15% refundable tax credit would be provided to unincorporated businesses.

Qualifying expenditures are costs incurred after July 1, 1998, to accommodate qualifying employees in performing their job functions, and include expenditures incurred to install a passenger elevator, a platform lift or a stairway lift; modify workstations and install required equipment and devices; and provide the support services of a job coach, a note-taker, a sign language interpreter, an intervenor, a reader or an attendant required by a qualifying employee.

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A qualifying employee is an individual who is not related to the employer and was not employed by the employer in the preceding 12 months; works at least 60 hours a month for a period of not less than three months; and qualifies for an existing federal or Ontario program for people with disabilities or is certified by a qualified practitioner as having a disability that is expected to last for more than a year and creates a substantial barrier to competitive employment.

This bill also contains provisions to enhance the community small business investment funds program and the

labour-sponsored investment funds program. These provisions will increase access to capital for small business in communities throughout Ontario, helping them to grow and create jobs.

In 1997, Ontario introduced the community small business investment funds program to promote greater access to investment capital for growing businesses with \$1 million or less in assets. Incentives were provided to encourage labour-sponsored investment funds and financial institutions to participate in this initiative.

The bill implements the 1998 Ontario budget proposal to further increase the flow of investment capital to Ontario's small business sector and proposes enhancements resulting from consultations. Individuals will receive a cash incentive of up to 15% on investments in the community small business investment fund of between \$150,000 and \$500,000. To further expand the pool of available investment capital, corporations, trusts and pension funds will also be available to invest in a community small business investment fund but will not receive an incentive.

The deadline for registering in a fund and the investment period during which investors can contribute to a community small business investment fund is extended from December 31, 1998, to December 31, 1999. If a labour-sponsored investment fund set aside funds for investment in a community small business investment fund before May 5, the investment period is extended from June 18, 1998, to December 31, 1998.

Other technical amendments are made to improve the functioning of the community small business investment fund and to clarify the policy intent of the legislation. For example, amendments clarify that the minimum size of a community small business investment fund corporation is \$5 million and the maximum size is \$10 million; clarify that the amount set aside by a labour-sponsored investment fund for investment in a community small business investment fund applies against its overall investment requirements; clarify that a labour-sponsored investment fund will not be suspended from issuing tax credit certificates where it has set aside an amount for investment in a community small business investment fund that fully offsets its penalty tax for the year; clarify that the test for determining whether an investment by a community small business investment fund is an eligible investment is made at the time of the investment by the community small business investment fund; and relax the arm's-length rules for community small business investment funds sponsored by aboriginal and university/research sponsors.

The bill would implement changes announced on September 29, 1998, to support the important role of labour-sponsored investment funds in providing venture capital to small and medium-sized businesses.

These changes parallel federal measures announced on August 31, 1998, to enhance the ability of labour-sponsored investment funds to provide venture capital: The maximum annual share purchase for which an individual can claim a tax credit is increased from \$3,500 to \$5,000 for the 1998 and subsequent tax years; the

calculation of the amount a labour-sponsored investment fund must invest in eligible businesses is amended to exclude the value of shares eligible for redemption, but not redeemed, and the net amount of federal and provincial refundable taxes and penalties paid by the labour-sponsored investment fund; the waiting period before a labour-sponsored investment fund can apply for a refund of Ontario penalty tax after complying with its investment requirements is eliminated.

The bill would also enact the February 19, 1998, announcement stating that individuals affected by the ice storm in eastern Ontario during January 1998 would have a one-month extension to the end of March 1998 to invest in a labour-sponsored investment fund, and claim an RRSP deduction, for the 1997 tax year.

Labour-sponsored investment funds and community small business investment funds would be permitted to do a follow-on investment in a business that is no longer an eligible business, ie, the business has grown beyond the eligible-business-size test, if the follow-on investment is required to facilitate a financial restructuring of the business and is held for only a limited time.

This bill creates tax cuts to create jobs. In order to encourage job creation and growth in high-technology, knowledge-based industries, the bill proposes tax incentives to support the interactive digital media, sound recording and computer animation and special effects industries. These incentives will help businesses in these industries to grow and contribute to the development of long-term, internationally viable Ontario industries, with jobs for the future. The bill proposes a new 20% refundable tax credit to corporations for qualifying Ontario labour expenditures incurred to create interactive digital media products in Ontario.

The 1998 Ontario budget announced that qualifying corporations would be Canadian corporations with revenues no greater than \$10 million and total assets no greater than \$5 million. But as a result of consultations, the incentive will be expanded to include corporations with revenues of up to \$20 million and total assets of up to \$10 million.

The bill proposes enhancements to the Ontario computer animation and special effects, or OCASE, tax credit for labour expenditures incurred after May 5, 1998: elimination of the annual tax credit maximum of \$500,000 per associated group of corporations, and extension of the credit to OCASE television productions under 30 minutes.

The bill proposes a new 20% refundable tax credit to Ontario-based sound recording companies for expenditures incurred after January 1, 1999, related to sound recordings by emerging Canadian artists, who are not just among the most talented in the world but are the most talented in the world.

This bill further supports job creation by reducing the payroll tax burden on small business. The phase-in of the \$400,000 employer health tax exemption is being accelerated by increasing the exemption for 1998 from \$300,000 to \$350,000 for employers and self-employed individuals.

In 1999, the tax on self-employed individuals will be eliminated. This measure was enacted in 1996, Bill 47.

We are also addressing the underground economy. Tax compliance incentives, such as new or increased penalties for failure to comply with corporations tax, retail sales tax and tobacco tax legislation, form a part of the revenue protection measures referred to in the title of this act.

Proposed amendments to the Tobacco Tax Act enhance existing sanctions by prohibiting possession of unmarked cigarettes by unauthorized persons and parallel the existing provisions relating to the possession of unmarked cigarettes for the purposes of sale.

The Tobacco Tax Act has specific provisions relating to the wholesale distribution of tobacco products: wholesale dealers selling tobacco for resale must be authorized by the minister and issued a permit; and persons purchasing tobacco for resale are only permitted to purchase it from wholesale dealers who are authorized. These requirements are critical to ensuring the correct tax has been collected and remitted and that tax-exempt product has not entered the taxable distribution system. New offences are created and fines and penalties are increased for unauthorized wholesaling of tobacco products, either through sales or purchases.

The Tobacco Tax Act also provides a general offence provision for persons contravening provisions of the act for which no penalty is provided. It is proposed that the minimum fine for general offences be increased from \$200 to \$1,000 and that the maximum be increased from \$5,000 to \$25,000. The existing jail term of three to six months would be removed in light of the enhanced amendments proposed for specific offences relating to the wholesaling of tobacco.

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The bill also proposes increases to fines under the Retail Sales Tax Act when a person is convicted of offences related to record maintenance, including making or participating in the making of false or deceptive statements, evasion of tax through record destruction or making or permitting false record entries.

The bill proposes increased fines and penalties to deter underground distribution of marked cigarettes by unlicensed wholesalers.

Under the Corporations Tax Act, the bill proposes an amendment to the 5% penalty for filing a late or incomplete return to adopt the federal provisions which increase the penalty by 1% per month to a maximum of 12 months while the return is outstanding and double the penalty for multiple occurrences.

The government remains committed to tax fairness through cutting taxes and ensuring that taxpayers receive efficient and effective public services.

This bill also includes non-taxation measures intended to fine-tune the realignment of local services.

Schedule A of the Services Improvement Act, 1997, amended the Ambulance Act to provide for the transfer to municipalities of full-funding responsibility for land ambulance services as of January 1, 1998, and full

responsibility for ensuring the proper provision of such services as of January 1, 2000.

The amendments proposed in this bill broaden the definition of "designated area" to include upper-tier municipalities where designed by the minister as part of a consolidated municipal service management structure; make it possible to consolidate service delivery management, in a single service delivery agent, for land ambulance and other services in any area of the province; and create new regulation-making powers for, among other things, agreements and arbitration as a means of determining the apportionment of land ambulance service costs within or between upper tier municipalities and/or delivery agents. All this is to empower municipalities to do more with less.

This government has proven in the first three years of its mandate that tax cuts create jobs. This year, we were able to bring in the 30% cut in personal income taxes we promised a full six months ahead of schedule. By spring of this year, we had already announced 30 tax cuts. The deficit has declined steadily. Estimated growth in the real gross domestic product in 1998 will be at least 3.7%. The Ontario economy has generated 440,000 net new jobs since the speech from the throne in September 1995. With this bill, the government will bring the number of tax cuts it has made to 67.

The measures in this bill will continue to help foster a climate for businesses to create even more jobs and give many more Ontarians the opportunity to earn a good living and build their future.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to join in the debate on Bill 81. I will be supporting this bill, and I wanted to outline some reasons, including some reasons relating to local conditions in my riding. I also wanted to speak in some detail about some of the provisions of the bill that may be a little less well known, such as the parts that deal with the Land Transfer Tax Act.

First of all, I want to say that the bill, which is referred to under its short name as the Tax Credits and Revenue Protection Act, 1998, is the next in a series of budget bills that we've seen this government bring forward. It's important to recognize that again this bill creates some tax reductions and some tax cuts. I understand that once this bill, if it is passed, goes through, we will have a record of producing tax cuts 67 different times so far in our mandate.

It's important to note that, from my memory, none of our budgets have been supported by either opposition party, despite the fact that each of the budgets has been consistent in reducing taxation, in trying to stimulate job creation and in reducing the provincial deficit as well. I think the public should remember that as they contemplate the provisions in Bill 81.

As my friend from Halton has said, the bill contains a number of measures designed to assist working families, particularly the provision that allows corporations a significant tax credit if they produce and agree to develop registered daycare centres in the workplace. This is certainly an incentive for working families and families

with young children to continue to be active in the workplace. It's a key provision that some corporations pride themselves on.

I met recently in my riding with a corporation that was planning on developing a new factory in my riding. One of the things they pointed to that they were very proud of was that they were a leader in industry in having daycare centres right in the facility. Most of the work they do is related to the development and design of auto parts, a very high-tech type of operation. They want to encourage their female working people to stay on the job, stay in the workplace. They've done that. Hanging on to staff is a key component in keeping a successful business running. One of the ways they've done that is by developing right in the workplace, right in the factories, the very successful daycare operations they have. They've found that has made them a leader in keeping their working staff very consistent, keeping them on the job site, so they don't have to continue to replace these people. Replacing your staff is one of the critical costs that companies run into. You can avoid that if you're able to develop daycare centres at the site. That's something this bill would make much easier for corporations, because there is a very significant tax credit contained in the bill for companies that are able to develop daycare centres at work.

Another provision in the bill worth noting is the acceleration of the reduction of the employer health tax. I know, from talking to small business people in my riding, that when the discussion comes up about the employer health tax, in many cases they have been told by their bookkeepers that they no longer have to deal with it. It's almost a matter that they are relieved twofold: one, because they don't have the cost of the employer health tax any more, but even more significant for most of the people I've spoken to has been the fact that they no longer have the time taken up by their bookkeeping staff to keep track of the employer health tax. In some cases they found it was difficult to calculate. The acceleration of this provision, so we can get to the \$400,000-and-under employers as quickly as possible, eliminating the employer health tax, is a significant elimination of red tape. It's a significant elimination of the cost to potential employers.

Earlier on today we passed Bill 25, which was a red tape reduction bill. It was the result of a process whereby our Red Tape Review Commission, headed up by MPP Frank Sheehan, carefully analyzing the legislation and the regulations in place, made recommendations on legislation to eliminate red tape. I was very surprised today to see that both opposition parties refused to support Bill 25, which is a step for all small business people in improving their relationship with government, making it easier for them to get through the daily grind of operating a business in Ontario.

Tax cuts create jobs. That's our general theory. It's one we've been consistent in applying from budget to budget. We have evidence, when we analyze job creation figures in Ontario, that our tax-cuts-to-create-jobs theory is working. We hear from the opposition members, particularly the member for St Catharines, that we have Bill Clinton to

thank for the job creation and economic stimulus that has occurred in Ontario, but I would argue that there is a difference between Ontario and other Canadian jurisdictions.

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When you compare our job creation numbers with other jurisdictions, we're ahead of other jurisdictions in Canada. We're doing better than our neighbouring provinces. We're doing better on job creation than neighbouring US states. One of the things that makes us different from those other jurisdictions is that we've been the most aggressive at reducing income tax. We think it's more than a coincidence; we think there's a direct tie-in between a reduction in taxes and job creation. In October we saw the numbers for job creation. Again, Ontario is leading Canada. Certainly, over the recent term in 1998, we have been well ahead of the other jurisdictions in Canada on job creation. It doesn't hurt to repeat the numbers. By September of this year, the Ontario economy had created 195,000 net new private sector jobs in 1998. That was far and away the most impressive job creation record in Canada. We certainly had created over half of the employment growth in the country since December 1997.

Another issue is that our consistency in reducing taxes and creating public confidence by reducing the deficit has not only led to the creation of more jobs, but it has also led to a reduction in the welfare rolls in Ontario. In my own riding, in the county of Simcoe, since our throne speech in September 1995, we've seen the welfare case load in Simcoe county drop by about 40%. In the district of Muskoka, in the other part of my riding, including the October figures, the welfare case load has declined by over 60% since June 1995. I find, in talking to my constituents, that the reduction in the welfare case load is something people are prepared to attribute not only to our welfare policies, but also to the budget and the creation of jobs, which has been very significant in the Simcoe and Muskoka part of Ontario.

With regard to jobs, we've had a significant decrease in the unemployment rate, both in Simcoe county and in Muskoka. This goes hand in hand with the reduction in the welfare numbers and the increase in investment in job-creating projects in my riding. I'd like to talk a little more about that, the entrepreneurial spirit that's evident in my riding.

I have a number of auto-industry-related investments that have occurred. Algonquin Automotive is a thriving auto parts design and manufacturing company. It started up in Huntsville some years ago. Recently, they purchased a once-abandoned factory in Gravenhurst. They now have that building up and running. They have added over 150 employees in that abandoned factory in Gravenhurst. Many of the auto parts they're designing and creating in Gravenhurst now are actually being shipped to American factories, where they're assembled — evidence again that we are able in Ontario to design and produce manufactured products more efficiently and cheaply than in the US, where many of these products are purchased and consumed, and in some cases where they're assembled.

We have the recent announcement by Algonquin Automotive and the Crown Group that they are going to build a plastic finishing factory in Bracebridge. This is one more factory they'll have in Muskoka. They already have their largest facility in Huntsville, they have a smaller facility in Gravenhurst, and now they're going to have a plant where they will finish off the parts which they design and manufacture in the other two factories. They're going to paint them and put on the final finish in Bracebridge. They expect to be employing another 50 people in the first year of operations. It's very exciting news for the town of Bracebridge. I'm sure Algonquin Automotive is looking forward to expanding its operations in Muskoka.

In the same part of the community, we have Rockcrest Development Corp, which has announced plans and further details on the Royal Muskoka Resort project. This is a huge project. It has about 850 acres, some of it in the more built-up and serviced part of Bracebridge and some of it more on the periphery of Bracebridge, where you have rural features. They're planning on having a retail commercial complex right at the Highway 118 end of their property. They're planning on having a resort conference centre and an adult residential complex. They're looking at the aging population in Ontario and those people who are showing a trend of moving towards central Ontario. They feel that now is the time to invest, and certainly we're delighted to see them investing in Bracebridge.

Muskoka Outfitters has recently opened a store in Bracebridge's downtown area, where they're going to sell outdoor equipment such as skis and hiking boots. Again, I think this is a reflection not only of an improving economy but also of entrepreneurs who realize that the population is aging, and as the population ages you see a trend towards more outdoor activity. So Muskoka Outfitters is taking advantage of that and they're investing, showing a willingness to invest and create jobs right in Bracebridge.

I recently attended the opening of the Pro-Line Rentals and Sales store in Port Carling. They are not only renting construction equipment to the building trades but also renting recreational equipment to the many people who come to Muskoka to vacation and the many people who cottage in Muskoka. They certainly have found that there's a thriving market and they're investing significantly. They have built a very big new facility right on the edge of Port Carling.

Recently I was able to attend, at a site right on Highway 11, the Doe Lake Road interchange, when the transportation minister announced a new interchange. It's certainly overdue, because there has been a number of accidents at the Doe Lake Road interchange. It's a level crossing of Highway 11. We're looking forward to the improved safety, but also it will open up important economic development opportunities around the Muskoka Airport. There are two correctional facilities adjacent to that and industrial-zoned lands which are on the east side of Highway 11. Now they'll have better access to the town of Gravenhurst.

In the town of Gravenhurst, Sloan's Restaurant, which was closed for quite some time and really was a reminder

of poor economic conditions in Gravenhurst and in the province, has reopened under new ownership. It's on Main Street, certainly an indication to the people of Gravenhurst that the economy has improved, because Sloan's Restaurant is no longer a symbol of a failing economy in the downtown area but an indication of investment back in the community.

We have the Eaton's building in Huntsville. For a long time the Eaton's building in Huntsville was a central mecca, something that drew people into the town of Huntsville. When it was announced that it was closing, of course there was a lot of sadness in the community of Huntsville. It was the only Eaton's outlet for miles around, and anyone in Muskoka who wanted to shop at Eaton's would go to Huntsville. So there was concern. But the property was immediately purchased by another investor in Huntsville, a person who runs a drugstore. They're going to relocate their drugstore to that space because it was in such a good location. What was initially a bad story has turned into a very good story. The downtown community in Huntsville is grateful that the property has been purchased and that there is investment and enthusiasm going back into that property. We're all looking forward to the development of the new drugstore. I think it'll continue to attract people to that part of town.

In Midland, in my riding, NEBS Business Forms is really an international business. They manage to market their business through the mail primarily, to businesses all over North America. They do business forms and will create letterhead or other types of standard forms that businesses use right in the Midland facility and send them out, primarily by mail or by courier. They have a flourishing business. They recently announced that 30 more jobs would result from a major investment in the operation of NEBS.

We have Day Specialties. It's a factory in Midland that I had the opportunity to visit recently. They make specialty glass products, including the kind of glass that some automobile manufacturers require in their products. Also, they make the special glass used in fireplaces that's able to withstand high heat, and in some cases it's specially tinted for those kinds of demands. They have found that the demand for their product has greatly increased recently and they are having the opportunity to expand their facility by about 20% or 25% in size. They think that will create another 15 or 20 new jobs in the town of Midland, which is a very significant increase in the number of employees in that factory in Midland. It's good to see Midland seeing a return to more employment, because they've gone through some tough times in past years.

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Now I want to speak about part VII of the act, which deals with the Land Transfer Tax Act, and relate this back to my riding as well. In my past life, I had the opportunity to deal with the land transfer tax people in Oshawa because I did a lot of real estate transactions as a lawyer. I can tell you that what the legal profession came to expect from government on land transfer tax was steady increases. We would just go through budget after budget

after budget. Most of the public wouldn't know much about the land transfer tax provisions in the budgets because it wasn't an item that the media seized on. I think by and large the media maybe didn't understand what the land transfer tax did or how it was applied. It is to some extent a hidden tax, a tax that hits people when they buy their homes. People who are commercial purchasers or vendors would be familiar with it, but most people don't know anything about the Land Transfer Tax Act except those few times in their lives when they buy a new home.

So it's refreshing to see in a budget — and we've had this in each budget — alterations to the Land Transfer Tax Act, not to make it more widespread or at a higher rate, but in most cases to exempt property transactions from the effect of the act. In this particular case, it's to clarify when people would be eligible for a refund. In this case, it's transactions where people have made a filing at the registry office on a technical issue on a transaction, not the kind of provision where government should be collecting tax, and that is clarified.

It is also refreshing that we won't have to see people lining up their cars at gas stations before budgets in this province, as people used to do. It used to be that when budget time was coming around, you'd go and buy gas because you knew those taxes were going to go up, or you'd go and buy consumer goods because you knew they were going to be taxed at a higher rate. Now the opposite is true, and that's one of the reasons our economy is going so well, because people know that after a budget in this province it's probably going to be less costly to buy consumer goods.

Those are the comments I have on the bill. I'd like to pass it to my colleague from Durham East to continue the debate.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my privilege and pleasure to follow the members for Halton Centre and Muskoka-Georgian Bay to make a few comments on Bill 81.

Bill 81 comes out of the May 1998 budget by Finance Minister Ernie Eves. Some of it is administrative in nature, but when I had a look through the bill, it's not just administrative issues. It's fairly substantive, actually. Both the prior speakers covered some of the technical aspects. There are 13 parts to the bill, some of which are in themselves quietly controversial. I won't touch on them, because I know that some of the members who have been here longer than I have — part IX, changes to the Pension Benefits Act, might be of some interest to some members of the House, those who, since we no longer have a pension here, question that that may come into effect.

There are other sections, but I'm going to, in a broad way, look at what I consider to be the most important parts of this legislation.

The first thing that affects people in my riding of Durham East is the child care expense for working families. It's probably the most important. I live in a generally hard-working, middle-class area of this province in Durham. It includes Oshawa and Scugog and Clarington, to name but three. I see these people day in, day out,

commuting primarily to larger centres. Of course there's another very important sector in my riding, the agricultural sector.

The child care supplement is a \$40-million investment in hard-working, middle-class families. I have a bit of information on that. I'm going to spend a bit of time talking about that particular section of the bill. It's a \$140-million program to help 350,000 young children in working families in Ontario, one part of this multi-faceted bill. With that particular option, modest and middle-income working families would receive a new Ontario child care supplement for working families of up to \$1,020 per year for each child under the age of seven. It is expected that some 210,000 families will benefit from this provision in Bill 81, which was announced in the May budget.

I believe there are other parts of that if you expand on that, and we're trying to encourage people to be self-sustaining and to work. It's unfortunate, but today it takes two income earners to keep up with the tax load, if you will. I hear my constituents and I hear the people from General Motors say they work the first six or seven months to pay their taxes.

I heard earlier today in some of the debate that people are working harder and getting less. It's true. I have some statistical information, to make a little segue here, on the performance of the economy. I think it's important to put this in context. The gross wage has probably gone up, I suspect, but the take-home pay has gone down. I want to look at 1985. The consumer price index at that time was 95.8%, based on 100 basis points value. By 1994, approximately 10 years, the consumer price index had risen to 131.3%. That's an increase of 37.6%. Most importantly, the income per capita had risen from \$16,000 in 1985 to some \$23,000 in 1994, an increase of 40%, but here's the problem: Between 1985 and 1994, on that same disposable income level of \$23,170, the tax burden went from \$1,800 to \$3,020, an increase of 67.7%.

Governments for the last decade — and we may repeat this mantra over and over again, but people have to understand why we are, arguably, taxed to death. That's clearly the case. We are. This child care supplement for hard-working, middle-class families is going to help that situation considerably.

It's important to put in context why this government is fighting a relentless battle to reduce taxes, reduce the burden of taxes. It's fundamentally one of the main pillars of our whole platform. I looked at the history from 1985 through to about 1994, prior to our taking over government. It's important to put on the record that in 1985-86, when the Liberal government was in power, they had six tax increases, which I could outline in some detail with the information I have. In 1986-87, there were a further four increases in tax by the then Liberal government. Again in 1988-89 there were six increases in taxes. In 1989 and 1990, there were 16 Liberal tax increases to the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario. In 1990-91, they were going into an election so there was only one tax increase. So their plan very clearly is to tax.

Every time I stand and every time I speak to people in my constituency, I say, "When you think of the word 'Liberal,' you think tax." The solution they've come up with to every problem is to spend more money. I want to spend more money as well, but I can't spend at the risk of putting other hard-working people further and further into debt. You can only spend the money the economy is generating.

I go on from 1991-92. When the NDP came in, the first thing they realized was that their programs had to be sustained by intensive tax increases. In that year, the NDP government had 10 tax increases. In 1992-93, there were 12 NDP tax increases. In 1993-94, there were 10 NDP tax increases.

There you have it: There were 32 separate NDP tax increases and there were 33 separate Liberal tax increases in that decade.

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It's important to go back to the numbers I was trying to share with the members earlier, where we saw that taxes went up 74% in a period where the income hadn't kept pace. Who is paying for it? It's a shell game. You promise and promise and promise. What you really are promising is to spend more money you haven't got, which the taxpayer is going to pay for eventually. I could go into some detail, but that's the background I want to leave here, that tax on a per capita level went up 67%, and that's clearly not acceptable.

It was repeated here earlier that with this particular bill we will have completed 67 tax reductions, including a 30% personal income tax reduction, and we've been in government just over three years. It's not simply doing as we promised; it's doing what had to be done.

Some people argue that this government has acted quickly and hastily, and others have said we've had to redo some of the municipal tax bills a number of times. I said on the record the other day that there may be other partners out there in the public sector for whom maybe it was in their best interests not to have some of this work too smoothly anyway, because in the last 10 or 15 years the private sector has been flattening out and declining because of the burden of red tape and tax, while the public sector has been increasing exponentially. They produce good services — I don't question that — but somehow they're not affected by inflation or recession. In 10 years, in municipal and school board budgets, every budget was a positive growth line. Every one was more spending, every single one. That clearly is not sustainable. We're no longer in the 1980s. Now the general, hard-working person realizes that we have to flatten the tax, just say: "That's it. We've got to reprioritize our spending."

I went back to the principles, right back to the fundamentals in the very popular document that was our election platform. I'm going to make some comparisons with this document here, which was then the Liberal platform. I think we've got to continually remind ourselves of motive. This particular bill, Bill 81, is finishing off commitments in the May 1998 budget and additional administrative measures. But to go back to the fundamental principles,

they're not that complicated, not that sophisticated. Certainly any person in government would admit that there will be some challenges in change and there will also be the need to revisit the change, and of course we're in the midst of doing that on some fronts.

There were five characteristics in this particular platform: lowering your taxes, less government spending, removing barriers to growth and opportunity, doing more for less, and the promised balanced budget. I ask members in the House tonight to review that report card, keeping in mind whether you individually and those watching tonight are better off generally in this province than you were just three and a half years ago. Overwhelmingly, people realize that we were on a spending binge and that change had to occur, and this plan, which was put down very clearly to the people, has worked. I thank every hard-working taxpayer, because they're the people who voted for this. They're the people who are sharing the burden. It's foolhardy and reckless for any government to promise that they're going to solve the problems with more spending.

It's important to cast some reference to this now obsolete document here. This document was a very poor imitation of the Common Sense Revolution, a very weak, absolutely ambiguous document, but it did make some commitments. I'm not sure if they were as serious as ours. We committed and promised to do what we're doing, and we're doing what we promised.

I'm looking at page 8 in this document here. If anybody wants one, I would ask you to call my constituency office, 697-1501, area code 905. I expect to keep this in front of the taxpayer and in front of the electorate from now until the budget is balanced. There's only one government that could possibly resist the temptation to spend money to solve every problem. If you leave it to any kind of Liberal government, whether it's federal, provincial or municipal, their solution to every problem is more spending. I don't need to repeat the 34 tax increases they had during their very short term of government. Not only was it a short term, but history is even more revealing. It was the highest period of revenue for the province of Ontario, absolutely. The growth was exponential at that period. Expenditures doubled. I'll repeat those later.

The Liberal government promised, however, that they not only were going to balance the budget but were going to cut taxes by 5% during their first term, so they realized that tax cuts were in order. But if I look at the detail, it doesn't wash, it certainly doesn't follow through. That's where it gets typically ambiguous. It's the Liberal shell game again. The Liberal solution — always keep it in mind — is to spend more money.

I have no problem with a socialist government. The previous government was a socialist government, and when they hit the wall — I talked to Floyd Laughren when I was on the select committee looking at nuclear. He said when they opened the books and saw the deficit was closing in on \$20 billion, they had an expenditure reduction plan and half the union membership left. Then they had the social contract, which was a temporary solution to try to get re-elected and not alienate the huge public sector union

membership, and they got their medicine. I think they're still suffering from it. I respect them; I respect that they recognize that you have to either reduce the level of service or increase taxes. It's that simple. Of course, we can get into all kinds of diversionary discussions, but I'm going to cover a few of their commitments.

The Provincial Auditor, Erik Peters, has clearly stated that this government is going to be spending almost \$20 billion in health care. The promise in this book, on page 38, was \$17 billion. In fact, at that time we were spending \$17.5 billion, so they were going to cut health care at the provincial level by \$0.5 billion. On top of that, their Liberal cousins in Ottawa passed down almost \$2.5 billion in transfer payment reductions. How were they going to make up the expenditure when the revenues were cut? This government's plan was far more thoroughly developed than some of the Liberal economists have given credit for.

There was an economist who had the courage to say, "A 30% tax cut and a 20% spending reduction will balance the Ontario budget in their first mandate, 2000-01" — Mark Mullins, who has a PhD in economics. There may be members here who want to challenge that. I think they should, but I want them to at least have the credentials or the academic background outside of pure, old-fashioned politics, of saying, "We can solve the problem."

When the NDP were in, they were losing about 1,000 jobs a week. The government, working with the private sector, has created over 450,000 net new jobs in this province — they're not public sector jobs; these are small business people — by reducing the tax burden. One of the sections of the bill deals with expanding the employer health tax provision. The Liberal employer health tax, another sort of shell game tax, among many — there were a number of those taxes; the business occupancy tax was another one. In this bill, we're expanding the provision for the employer health tax to \$350,000. It's currently capped at a payroll of \$300,000, and we're expanding that to \$350,000 for small business. That's clearly a small business payroll decision.

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There are a number of other sections in here that might be worth touching on. At this time I'm just going to flip through a couple of them, because they did interest me. One of them was the changes to the tobacco tax.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): What about the estate tax, a billion and a half dollars?

Mr O'Toole: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt wants to talk about the estate tax. I'll save the best for last. The Estate Administration Tax Act, 1998, is enacted in response to a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada from October 22. It was a case called *Re Eurig Estate*. The effect of the act is to impose a tax from May 15, 1950. The tax is the same amount as the fees paid presently in probate matters under the Surrogate Courts Act and the Administration of Justice Act. The tax liability created will be offset by the fees that have been paid during the same period, so there's no additional revenue; not one nickel.

Mr Phillips: Get that. Wow.

Mr O'Toole: Again, this is a typical response from the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. His government collected it. The court decision was made, and as usual, this government is just obeying the law. It's legitimizing the collecting of a tax which was deemed by the court to be inappropriate. No additional revenue will be raised retroactively as a result of the new tax imposed by the act.

The Supreme Court of Canada, in its decision in the Eurig estate, stayed the effect of the order for six months to allow time for provinces to consider the impact of the court's judgment. We had no choice. It's the naming of a tax. But the argument in the opposition will likely go like this: They're trying to find some way to say that this government instilled a new tax. For anyone listening tonight, recognize that there is a court decision and this government is obeying the law in a way that doesn't create one cent of new revenue.

Our Minister of Finance introduced this on November 23. The appropriate time has gone into this. There's the Community Small Business Investment Funds Act. That's a very important aspect of this bill for small business. There are provisions in here as well for the employer health tax, as I said, moving from \$300,000 to \$350,000. And there are provisions for the child care supplement.

The most important one I want to mention last but not least. It certainly is a good-news story. This is the access for Ontarians with disabilities. This is a tax deduction for corporations that equals up to 100% of qualified expenditures incurred after July 1, 1998, for supportive services for the physically disabled, enabling employees with disabilities to work. The maximum expenditure qualified will be \$50,000 per employee with a disability. The government is taking measures like this, very sensitive measures, to encourage the work ethic in our society, something that has been sadly neglected, and taking the actions to make accessibility an issue and a responsibility of the employers themselves, who really recognize that everyone wants to play an active role.

My time has come to a conclusion, but I'm satisfied with the details in Bill 81. I'll be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Phillips: I appreciate the chance for Mr O'Toole to respond to some comments I have on his comments. I happen to notice in the budget that you and the Harris government have taken the debt of the province up by \$22 billion. You came in and you've taken the debt of the province up by \$22 billion. I see now that the average family in the province owes \$6,000 more than when Mike Harris became Premier. They now owe \$6,000 more in debt. These are not my numbers; these are the numbers from the budget. If every family now owes \$6,000 more in debt, what do you think they're paying in interest to cover that debt? Probably about \$500 a year in extra interest costs.

I also notice here in the document, the government's own budget, that there has been one surplus since 1968: 1989-90, \$90 million.

The tax cut: Every penny of the tax cut is borrowed. This is voodoo stuff. You go out and borrow \$10 billion to give a tax cut.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Look at the federal budget.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Lambton.

Mr Phillips: The average family in Ontario now owes \$6,000 more in debt. You've run up the average family debt by \$6,000. So the average hard-working family now has to pay \$500 more a year in interest costs. It's all voodoo. You've run up \$22 billion more in debt. You have borrowed every penny to pay for the tax cut. The average hard-working family in my constituency owes — and these are not my numbers, these are your numbers — \$6,000 more in debt because of Mike Harris. So, yes, people love the tax cut, but we've borrowed every penny to pay for the tax cut, every single penny. The member says, "What a fine way of managing the economy." Sure, go and borrow all the money to pay for the tax cut.

The Acting Speaker: I just want to remind members that when you debate, you get it and you've got to take it.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): We didn't give anything.

The Acting Speaker: That's right. You charge, they charge. They attack. Member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Now it's our turn to do just that. I would first of all remind my Liberal friend in the caucus beside me that in terms of deficits, it was their government in 1990 that bragged during a campaign that there was going to be a \$25-million surplus, and when the books were looked at and we opened up the cupboards, we were talking a \$3-billion deficit. So his criticisms are correct but there's some criticism that goes their way also in terms of how well they can manage the store.

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: Don't. It always worries me when Tories applaud anything I say. Please, don't do that.

I want to comment specifically on the comments of the member for Durham East who always makes interesting comments in this place. He talked about the fact that — and I'm paraphrasing — "Don't anyone dare to suggest that Tories have raised taxes; don't dare to suggest that in any way, shape or form." Yet the reality is that every tax that's being increased in municipal budgets right now is a result of your downloading on to municipalities. Property tax increases that are going through the roof are a result of your legislation in terms of reassessment and your downloading. You've left my community of Hamilton-Wentworth over \$36 million in debt every year because of your downloading. You raised those property taxes just as much, if not more, than the individual aldermen and councillors who had to vote. The same thing applies to copayments, which Mike Harris said are taxes, that are now applied to the seniors drug plan; library costs that have gone up; recreation costs that have gone up. That's because of your downloading on to municipalities. It's your tax increases.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I'd like to congratulate the members who spoke tonight for us. I'd like to talk about the member from Halton, who gave us what I thought was a comprehensive outline of what was in the bill and explained to each of us the things that were necessary for us to know about the bill.

I'd also like to talk about the member from Muskoka who talked about the economic situation in Muskoka. I think many of us travel there and do some vacationing there. It was interesting to see the growth that is happening in the Muskoka area and the jobs that are coming to the area. I think we all worry about the tourist industry and how well it does in the province and it's good to see that along with the tourist industry growing in the province, we also have jobs and investments and manufacturing businesses going into the tourist areas. We're pleased by that and pleased that that's happening.

I think it's interesting to hear the member from Muskoka talk about how the tax cuts and the increases that people had to spend in their own communities have allowed those jobs to grow and the opportunities to grow in Muskoka. He talked about the spend, spend, spend attitude that had happened in the province previous to that and how that had really made people in the province have less to spend and governments have more to spend, and we needed to change that.

The member for Durham East always does a fine job. He seems to know things about every bill. I'd like to congratulate him on his discussion today, on his talk about how we can better utilize tax dollars, how these kind of opportunities make our province a stronger province, where we have hope and opportunity for our children.

I think all three of these gentlemen tonight did an excellent job and I'd like to congratulate them.

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Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I hope to have an opportunity to debate this bill more fully a little later on, but I'm pleased to make some comments with regard to the previous speakers. When I debate this bill later this evening, I'd like to speak about land ambulances, workplace accessibility and estate administration, but the member for Durham East never ceases to remind me of things that I should also speak about and I will speak about them at some length later.

I have some information here if anybody wants to talk about tax increases and Mike Harris the Taxfighter. I'll probably speak at some length about the 16 tax increases that amounted to \$1.823 billion annually that the Taxfighter is supposed to have supported. I'll also probably quote from the auditor's report in 1991 where he said Ontario had only one surplus in the last 20 years and that was the year ending March 31, 1990.

My colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt has referred to that, where your own budget papers referred to that \$90-billion surplus. It's been asked in some of the questions and comments, "What happened then in the 1990 budget to the surplus of some \$30 million that was budgeted for the year 1991?" I will be quoting again from the auditor's report, 1991, pages 14 and 15, and I will

help you answer that question as to what happened to that surplus.

The member for Durham East always gives me an opportunity for these things. I only wish I had waited until after I had eaten before I heard him speak.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham East, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr O'Toole: I thank the members for Hamilton Centre, Essex South and Scarborough-Agincourt, but most importantly, the member for Huron for her very kind remarks.

In the limited time I have, I want to make sure we go over the fact that between the McLeod Liberal years from 1985 to the end of the Bob Rae reign, the actual debt interest — that's the interest on the debt — went from \$2.8 billion to almost \$8 billion. That's the interest. We were spending more on interest. It was crowding out the payment for program spending. What happened? The actual debt doubled. So they were spending borrowed money, and that's their plan.

If you stick to the debt interest issue, there is a very new theory. It may be difficult for some to grasp — I wouldn't want to comment in any personal way — but the suggestion is that somehow our tax cuts haven't increased revenue. I refer the member for Scarborough-Agincourt to the outlook statement just made recently. Overall revenue is up almost \$7 billion; a 30% tax cut and revenue is up.

Let's look at why this went up. Personal income tax revenue in 1994-95 was \$14.7 billion. In 1998, guess what? It was up almost \$2 billion. It was up to almost \$16.1 billion. So there's an increase. Let's look down here on this list. Where did the revenue come from? Corporate tax — that means lots of people working, lots of new companies — almost doubled: \$4.5 billion up to \$7.6 billion and climbing. Taxes are down, revenue is up. It's called the Laffer curve. Look it up. Just read about it. It actually works.

Your plan is tax and spend. That's the Liberal plan. All the people watching tonight should always remember they have one plan: Spend money.

The Acting Speaker: I would like to bring to your attention the presence in the Speaker's gallery of a former Speaker of the assembly of Ontario and also the former member for Scarborough-Ellesmere.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: And also a constituent of mine, so I'd better watch myself tonight. He's a local resident.

I want to begin debate on the bill. First, I'm always interested in Mr O'Toole. He thinks that if he yells loud enough it makes it a fact. But I just say to the public, get a budget book and take a look at the numbers. For example, here's a 10-year summary of the spending. This may come as a shock to Mr O'Toole, because I don't think he's looked at it, but there are numbers in here: total expense as a per cent of gross domestic product. I'm not one who goes back and looks at the past, but the last year of the Liberal government happens to be in the government's books here. The total expense as a per cent of GDP in 1989-90, the last year of the Liberal government, was

14.8%. Under Mike Harris it's 15.5%. Public debt interest as a per cent of revenue in 1989-90 was 9.3%. In other words, that's what the government of the day was spending. Today, what's Mike Harris spending? It's 17.3%. The total debt as a per cent of the gross domestic product actually has gone up since Mike Harris became Premier.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): He's got to stop spending so much. What are you saying, Gerry?

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Phillips: This is the way Mike Harris operates: Go and borrow \$22 billion.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for York-Mackenzie.

Mr Phillips: The average family in the province now owes \$6,000 more. Remember this: When you're listening to Mike Harris saying he gave you a tax cut, you also owe \$6,000 more in debt. From the day Mike Harris became Premier to today, everybody in this province, every family owes \$6,000 more in debt. What are we doing on that? We're all paying interest on that debt, roughly \$500 a family in interest. So I get out the tax cut and I find, when everything's said and done, that the average family gets a tax cut of about \$500 and we are paying \$500 a year more in interest costs to service the debt of Mike Harris.

The fact is that other provinces and the federal government have handled this issue differently. When Mike Harris became Premier of the province the deficit was about \$10 billion. The deficit for the rest of the country, the federal government and the provinces, all the other provinces, was about \$43 billion. It's \$10 billion in Ontario, \$43 billion in the rest of the country. What did the rest of the country do? They got their fiscal house in order; they didn't borrow money for a tax cut. Now, when you take into account the federal government and all the other provinces, they are running surpluses of about \$4 billion. We're still running a deficit of about \$4 billion.

The Harris magic is, "I'm going to go and borrow money to give you a tax cut." I just say to every family in the province — and don't take my word for it, get out the budget book — you now owe \$6,000 more per family. The Harris policy? Borrow and give somebody a tax cut. People may say, "I like the tax cut," but you're going to be paying interest today, tomorrow and for the foreseeable future. Just look at the numbers. That's the Harris policy: Borrow to give a tax cut. The rest of the country took a slightly different approach. They got their fiscal house in order, they now are running surpluses and that's how they're funding it.

I want to begin to talk about some of the aspects of the bill. The very first part of Bill 81 is called the Ambulance Act. That's the very first part of the bill, the Ambulance Act. What's it designed to do? It's designed to download, to dump on to property tax \$200 million a year in ambulance costs.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): In exchange for —

Mr Phillips: The member for Scarborough East is here and he always comes in to barrack, and as you say, Mr Speaker, he'll get his chance, if he can get on the agenda.

But \$200 million a year in ambulance costs on to property tax. In total, the province dumped \$660 million of added costs on to property tax. So around the province, when people are looking at property tax increases, it should come as no surprise — \$660 million.

This particular one, dumping ambulance costs, you may remember that Mike Harris went out and personally selected 14 people to look at things that should be put on to the municipal level and things that should be handled by the province. This was the Crombie Who Does What panel. One of the things that Crombie said was: "Don't do this. Don't put ambulances on to property taxes. It should never be there." This is the language they used: "The panel strongly opposes such a move," the Who Does What panel. "We are unanimous in the view that it shouldn't be done."

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When you think about it, when we are trying to manage our entire health system, when we're trying to find, to use the jargon, a seamless system for our health care, to fragment it and to put ambulances on to municipal taxpayers is a fragmentation of the worst order. But Mike Harris, anxious to implement his income tax cut, loaded this on to the property tax. That's the very first part of this bill, ambulances, and what it essentially does is to give the minister unfettered rights to not only dictate how the ambulance services will be structured but dictate how they will be funded by municipalities. That's the first part of the bill.

The second part of the bill has to do with the Community Small Business Investment Funds Act. This is an interesting idea. First announced in the 1997 budget, it's now approaching two years old, this idea, and we're still waiting to see it come to fruition.

This is a government that says: "We're desperately interested in making sure that we develop community-oriented businesses. We've got to get moving on this. This is a huge priority for us." Guess what? We're now almost two years after it was announced in the 1997 budget and there is still not one of these up and operational — not one. Almost two years after this huge, high priority was announced in the budget with great fanfare, we now have, we understand, one in some area of incubation. It may happen soon; no one can tell us where, but it may happen soon.

I appreciate the rhetoric. The title is extremely good: Community Small Business Investment Funds Act. As a matter of fact, this was the 1997 budget, the one of a year and a half ago. It took up several pages. It was going to be a high priority for the government. Nothing's happened. Asleep at the switch again. Here we are today looking at the next — actually, the thing is being amended before it's even off the ground. It reminds me of the property tax bills.

The third part of the bill I'd like to talk about is the one that they don't talk about, and that is the new Estate Administration Tax Act, a brand-new tax. I smiled to myself the day it was introduced, because, for anybody who follows the proceedings around here, normally when

a minister is introducing a bill that the government's at all proud of, there will be what's called a ministerial statement and the government will pat itself on the back and we in the opposition get a few moments to respond to it. But there was no ministerial statement. As a matter of fact, if you were to read the material that was put out after this bill was tabled, with no ministerial statement, you couldn't find a reference to this brand-new tax called the estate tax. It's going to raise \$1.5 billion. It's retroactive to 1950.

The interesting part of it is, I remember Mike Harris when he was in opposition and Bob Rae brought in this estate fee. Mike Harris was apoplectic: "This is a succession tax by any other name." But now, very quietly, the minister frankly hid it. It was not in the explanatory notes; he tried to slide it through. It was only as you got into the fine print that it was found. Here's the issue: It's \$1.5 billion, it's retroactive to 1950, but it implements a level of fees or taxation that, when Mike Harris was in opposition, he found objectionable. I thought, well, if he found it objectionable because Bob Rae brought it in, perhaps he's going to say, "I'm going to change the tax." No, no, it's a \$1.5-billion brand-new tax.

Mr Wettlaufer: What did you say it was, Gerry?

Mr Phillips: Well, I don't think the government can give up the money. It's \$1.5 billion. But you should have the decency to treat the public to what it's entitled to, and that is, come out and tell everybody you're doing it. Don't try and sneak it through. The public's too smart for that. I guarantee if you go and look at the background material, even with a microscope, you can't find a mention of it. If you've got any political courage, you say: "Listen, we're going to bring in a tax. It will be \$1.5 billion. Furthermore, we're going to do what Bob Rae did; we're going to put that tax on the estate." You don't try and hide it from the public. That's what I find objectionable.

We're on the budget bills, we're dealing with the seventh property tax bill, this is a huge mess, and the government does not have the courage to allow even one day where the public can come and express their views on the property tax.

I will say on this probate fee issue, the reason you have to deal with it is because the Supreme Court of Canada, the highest court in the land, said, "You're trying to raise taxes not through a democratically elected body but through regulation." What does that mean in real language? What was attempted on this estate tax thing was that through regulation, which can be dealt with in secrecy by the cabinet — no one knows it's even being dealt with — with the stroke of a pen, the government was essentially raising taxes. What's more fundamental than that?

No public, no democratic society allows their governments to tax them without representation, to levy taxes on them without doing it in public with a democratic vote. That's what that ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada was all about. They said: "You are using your regulatory power to essentially impose a tax by simply calling it a fee. That's illegal." I use the word "illegal" advisedly. That's what the court said, "You cannot do that." So the

government was forced to bring in a piece of legislation so that instead of it being a fee, it's a tax.

The reason I raise this is because exactly the same thing is happening with property taxes. My business friends don't all understand this, but when you look at your business property tax bill, about 60% of all business property taxes go to education. That tax is set not by a school board, not by a municipality, not by the Legislature; it's set by the cabinet. For residences, about a quarter of your property tax goes to education, and that's set by regulation.

In my opinion, this is extremely important. Here is the government of Ontario, by regulation, in privacy, in secrecy, setting \$5.5 billion of revenue without the public having any input into it. There is no opportunity to debate it. We, the elected officials, have no chance to see it. It is done secretly in the cabinet by regulation and then simply becomes a decree. It is, frankly, wrong. For the life of me, I don't understand why the Conservative backbench allow this.

If you were in opposition and any government tried to say, "We are going to set taxes to raise \$5.5 billion, we're going to do it by regulation, we're going to do it in privacy and we're not going to allow you to vote on it," in my opinion, you'd be in revolt. But because, for whatever reason, you're in government and the cabinet has told you you're going to have to just keep quiet on it, you're prepared to allow the cabinet to set \$5.5 billion worth of revenue by regulation.

To me it is fundamentally wrong. For the life of me, I don't understand why the Conservative backbench has not revolted on it. In my opinion, it is only a matter of time before the courts will say: "This is obscene. You can't be setting taxes like that." We all know about the Boston Tea Party, we all know —

Mr Gilchrist: Why didn't you guys do it, then?

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Mr Phillips: Mr Gilchrist is barracking away again, but I'll tell you, if you were in opposition, you would never set \$5.5 billion of taxes by decree. You may like it now because you've got the hammer and you've got the power. You can do it, but it's wrong. Someday you'll be in opposition, that's just the way the system works, and you'll find out that in your grab for power — Harris wants complete control of education, all aspects of it. He wants to tell every school board exactly how many pennies they can spend, and he controls 100% their budgets. He tells the councils: "You go raise me \$5.5 billion of property taxes and I'll tell you exactly how much I want. I won't let you see how I arrive at that. I won't let you see a vote here, but that's what's going to happen."

Maybe we'll be saved by the courts. It was called Bill 160. We said it was obscene. There isn't anything more fundamental than the public having a right to see in full public view a decision on how they're going to be taxed. Nothing is more fundamental than a public debate and a public vote on taxes. But on the \$5.5 billion — it's the fourth-largest source of revenue in the province — we never get a chance to even discuss it here. If you want to

talk about taxes, about having a say in taxes and about hard-working people having the right to understand how their taxes are set, nothing could be more fundamental than this.

We are dealing tonight with this probate issue, with the estate fees, because the courts stepped in and said, "We're going to stop governments from abusing their powers." That's essentially what they said: "We are not going to let you raise taxes by calling something a fee and get away with not dealing with this in public." The probate fee issue is a major part of this bill and it raises significant questions elsewhere.

I want to talk a little bit about the child care supplement. This area is designed in its crassest terms. All of us are anxious for working families to have better access to child care. I'm a grandfather. Our daughter has a four-year-old son for whom they need child care, and it's a struggle. It's always a struggle with any young family, getting them to the child care and then to school and all those sorts of things. It's a significant challenge and I'm anxious to support measures that help to improve it.

I will say this particular one is interesting. Just so the public understand, the government essentially decided to throw out a plan that they introduced a year ago and bring this plan in. In its final analysis it's designed to get a cheque ready with Mike Harris's picture on it to be sent out to all of the people who qualify, probably a few weeks before the election. It is retroactive to July 1, 1998, it's at about \$85 a month, and they say, "We'll send it out after royal assent." It's a neat gimmick, although the public see through these things of trying to buy them with their own money. The public see through the borrowing of money for tax cuts. The public will see through Mike Harris sending out a cheque that he has held back since July. We could have dealt with this thing last session, but no, Mike held it back. I think it will probably go out in March or April. But the public will see it for exactly what it is: "Why didn't he pass this bill and begin getting me my help on July 1, 1998?" The House could have dealt with it. It's no accident that we are dealing with this at the last moment, something announced in the budget months ago that could have been dealt with months ago.

I just say to the public, beware of — what's that saying? — bearing gifts and just recognize that about four or five weeks before the election some of your tax money will arrive, money that could have been paid to you earlier. It will come to you. Mike is accumulating every month about \$85 per child, and as I say, there will be a neat envelope sent out with Mike Harris's picture on it. Then, by the way, it will be sent out every month. There are 200,000 of these to go out every month.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): How much does that cost?

Mr Phillips: My colleague asks how much it costs. It will probably cost \$1 a cheque, so we're talking about \$200,000 every month. But why is it? It's sort of like Mike Harris's baby bonus.

Having said all that, we're looking at ways to improve child care. I just wish they hadn't done it in this way that creates a very transparent pre-election gimmick.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Well, that's what it will be. I don't think there's much doubt about that.

I go back to the teachers' pension. I ran in 1975. I didn't win, but I ran in 1975. One of the reasons I didn't win was that Bill Davis promised a fully indexed pension for all the teachers, and that was a winner. Well, from 1975 until the defeat of the government, there wasn't a penny from the provincial government. By the way, it was a promise made of a fully indexed pension, fully funded by the taxpayers, and the teachers would not have to pay anything into it. But Bill Davis — and I might say, Mike Harris was in the cabinet — never put a penny into it.

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): That's not right, Gerry.

Mr Gilchrist: He wasn't in cabinet that year.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Scarborough East, come to order.

Mr Phillips: Mike Harris was in one of the cabinets that never put a penny into it.

Mr Arnott: It was Frank Miller's cabinet.

Mr Phillips: Frank Miller never put a penny into it. Mike Harris was there and so was Ernie. It was a neat thing, because they never put a penny in. It was like the perfect promise: You win an election and then you spend nothing on it. But it kept building up and building up until finally something had to be done about it.

The reason I raise this is because the auditor has warned us of similar games being played. Luckily the auditor caught the government and forced the government to change the way it reports its finances. This is the 1998 budget, and the auditor forced substantial changes in the way the finances were reported.

The auditor has gone on to say he is extremely worried about Ontario Hydro. They're reporting over the next three years a profit of \$2 billion and the auditor says they're going to lose \$3 billion. That's a \$5-billion swing. That's what the auditor said to us.

I have a personal concern about school capital. All the school capital now is 100% the responsibility of the province, but none of the debt of school capital is on the province's books. It's all on the municipal books. I'll just say to my municipal friends, someday this is going to hurt your credit rating when the credit rating agencies find that the province has decided they're not going to put the school debt on their books and it's going to be on municipal books.

The reason I raise that is because I've been through it. In 1975 the great money managers of the Conservative government gave a fully indexed pension and never put a penny into it for 10 years. It was the new government that had to finally deal with it, and we're still dealing with it. The bill we're dealing with tonight is still dealing with that unfunded liability that started back in 1975. I always smile to myself. The taxpayers can get very upset about pensions, and I just say to them, it was Bill Davis who made that promise to the teachers during the election

campaign. He didn't have a gun to his head. That was the promise that was made. That deals somewhat with the pension issue.

2010

On the part of the bill that deals with helping people with disabilities — and again I'm very supportive of matters that help persons with disabilities. I might add a very quick personal story, if you don't mind, only to demonstrate to the public how, with a little bit of assistance, persons with disabilities can make an enormous contribution. I coached hockey for 25 years, as you may or may not know, for 15 years with a city of Toronto police officer. About 10 years ago he got in a car accident and went from a fully able-bodied person to a quadriplegic, and he was off work, obviously, for some period of time. About five years ago he was able to go back to work on the police force, as a quadriplegic, primarily because of technology and some assistance. He became, in my opinion, Toronto's expert on youth gangs. Then he competed for promotion and became a detective, with 14 people reporting to him, dealing with intelligence matters.

The reason I raise that is to make the point that all he needed was a little bit of help, just some assistance for the workplace to adapt. I take my hat off to the metropolitan Toronto police force. They have done a terrific job of accommodating persons with disabilities. The beauty of all this is that Ontario benefits from a terrific police officer with, in my opinion, great judgment and a major contributor to our society. So I'm anxious to see wherever we possibly can that assistance.

The bill provides some help. I would just caution as to how much it really is. It is in the form of credits. While businesses are able to write off the expense of it, it is not a substantial amount of money to the organizations. That won't stop them from doing it and will provide some encouragement, but I just don't want us to overestimate the amount of assistance this provides for corporations. It provides some; it will focus some effort on it but will not take it that far.

On the bill, I'm pleased to comment on it. What has provoked the least explanation from the government is this \$1.5-billion new estate tax. I say again, the reason we're dealing with it is that the courts have said that governments, if they want to raise taxes, have to do it in public through their duly elected legislatures. That was the essence of the argument. They said that raising all of these billions of dollars across the country in estate taxes is being done improperly, but we have done exactly the same thing with property taxes for education, and that, by the way, is much larger and much more emotional. I think it's just wrong, dead wrong that we're allowing the Premier to set \$1.5 billion of taxes and we, the elected people, representing the public have no say or no input into that.

The community small business incentive fund: I think a measure of the government's priority on it is that it's been around almost two years now, there is still not one up and operational, and we are amending the original proposals in it. I would have thought, after the 1997 budget spent page after page talking about it, that the government would

have put a substantially larger priority on that than they have here.

On the child care supplement, without question what we're going to find about three or four weeks before the election is what I think many will regard as a very transparent use of taxpayers' dollars to try and buy the election. I'll just say to the people in my area that this was announced back in April 1998, and they waited almost a year to get you the money, for obvious reasons. You should have had the money far earlier than this, but it will be delayed so Mike can send out an envelope with his picture. Believe me, they have no hesitation on it. The government right now has spent almost \$50 million, taxpayer money, on advertising. I find it obscene and regrettable that they can find \$50 million to spend on paid, basically political advertising before an election, and this will just be another one of those things.

Bill 81, as I say, was introduced without much opportunity for the minister to comment because I don't think he wanted to admit he was introducing a \$1.5-billion tax. I'm pleased to begin debate on Bill 81 and look forward to continued debate on it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Crozier: It's a pleasure for me this evening to have a few comments with regard to Bill 81. I'm not a gambling person, and anybody who knows me will know that, but I'm willing to bet that come some Monday soon, we will have time allocation on Bill 81. We spent the afternoon debating a time allocation bill with regard to property tax and we pointed out the total mismanagement of the government in bringing their seventh, and some will argue eighth, property tax bill to the floor, so mismanaged, as a matter of fact, that not only are the number of bills just mind-boggling, but it's brought so late in the year.

I'm just going to make a little prediction tonight, as I have in my introductory remarks, that before the month of December is out we will be debating a time allocation on Bill 81 as well. Whenever we talk about tax bills, budget bills, the 1998 budget, as we're speaking about here tonight, it reminds us of our own taxes. I thought it rather morbidly humorous this past week that I got my 1999 tax assessment and I'm going to be given to — I think we all are — somewhere in January to appeal our tax assessment, when in fact the deadline for the 1998 tax assessment has been extended on occasion and we haven't even reached the point at which 1998 tax assessments can be appealed.

This is the kind of mismanagement we're having to deal with and yet try and debate substantive bills when oftentimes we're not sure whether the very bill we're debating is going to be the last one. So not only do you not know quite how much to say, you don't know what to expect in the near future. For all those folks in the province who have recently received their 1999 tax assessment, I guess, if you had any question about your 1998 tax assessment, which you still have another month to appeal, you'd better get that appeal in on your 1999 as well. I really don't know what the bottom line on my taxes is going to be this year. It's most difficult to have a house-

hold budget when you don't know what your taxes are going to be even in December of the year in which you're going to owe those taxes.

2020

It's a really interesting dilemma that we're faced with. I have to think that since my 1998 property tax hasn't been set yet and since there probably are a number of appeals because, as was mentioned earlier today in debate by my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, only those whose taxes increase appeal them. When I was on the town council in Leamington, I can't ever recall anyone coming in and appealing because their taxes were too low. The municipality is going to have to make up for those taxes that are appealed. I guess that's going to be part of my tax bill. It certainly makes the end of the year interesting when Christmas is coming along and the monthly amount I budgeted for taxes hasn't even arrived yet.

Earlier this evening, I believe the member for Durham East raised some question about tax increases. When we debate these bills this late in the year, we should be concentrating on what's ahead. But the member for Durham East insisted on going back in history a bit, so I thought I would do that briefly as well. It wasn't my intention to do it tonight, but in speaking, he gave me enough time to do a little bit of research and find that Mike Harris the Taxfighter also has a blemish on his record. We always have to be careful in this place about what we say on any particular issue because often it comes back to haunt us. I have been here five years now. I suspect that over those five years I've said something that may or may not come back to haunt me sometime.

Mike Harris the Taxfighter: Here's his record from 1981 to 1984, in which he supported 16 tax increases that amounted to \$1.823 billion on the backs of the taxpaying public of Ontario. Ministry of Finance staff, you will be interested to know, have confirmed that the 1981 tax increases were larger than any Liberal or NDP tax increases when adjusted for inflation and gross domestic product growth. Isn't that an interesting fact? I'm sure the Premier is listening to these remarks tonight and he'll be interested to know that we're all still aware that the Taxfighter was part of tax increases in personal income taxes, in OHIP premiums back in those days and fuel tax increases.

By the way, we're going to debate a resolution of one of the government members this week on gasoline pricing. I will be pointing out to that member and other members of the Legislature that Ontario has the second-highest gasoline taxes in the country. If the member wants to prepare his remarks for Thursday morning and suggest that his government cut gasoline taxes, I'm sure the travelling public and the driving public in Ontario will be pleased to hear that.

Tobacco taxes were increased while Mike Harris was part of the government of the day; beverage taxes were increased. In 1982, they decided that OHIP premiums were too low and Mike Harris voted to increase those. The retail sales tax was increased in 1982; tobacco tax again; and beverage taxes again. In 1983, OHIP premiums:

Again Mike Harris felt they weren't high enough and he voted to increase OHIP premiums, the taxes on alcohol and tobacco again, and corporation taxes. Now a friend of Mike Harris, now he's their friend, but back then it would appear, at least in 1983, while he was part of the government of the day, he helped vote for increases in corporation tax from 14% to 15%; social service maintenance tax — it goes on — and OHIP premiums were attacked again.

All I'm saying to the member for Durham East is that when he likes to bring up history, he has to be careful because his Premier was part of that history and his Premier was part of the government that voted to increase those taxes, so he's not without some baggage, as they sometimes say, in public office.

I want to point out again something that's on the record but needs to be brought up in light of this history lesson that we were given by some of the members of the government. On page 14 of the 1991 Provincial Auditor's report, the auditor said, "Ontario has only had one surplus in the last 20 years, the year ended March 31, 1990." That was the year when there was a Liberal government in power.

There was some question by some this evening as to why, following that budget, a surplus turned into a significant deficit the following year. The auditor, in an excerpt from the auditor's report of 1991, pointed out that the 1990 budget, which was tabled April 24, 1990, and forecast a surplus of \$30 million for the year ending March 31, 1991, ended up with a deficit of \$3 billion.

The major factor, the Provincial Auditor says, was the extent of the recession, which was obviously not foreseen at the time of the budget. The members of the New Democratic government would remember the severity and the extent of that economic downturn. In fact, I think I've heard some governments blame that on the New Democratic government, and yet we know that there were world conditions that affected it and we know that there were conditions in Canada that affected it.

The same as they're trying to take credit for the economic increase now, this government wants to take credit for everything. The member for Durham East said, at least the way I interpreted what he said tonight, that the whole economic increase is because they reduced taxes. I suggest that it's more than that. The same as the recession was not the fault of any one government, perhaps even any one country, the economic benefits that we're enjoying today are certainly the effect on Canada of the United States economy, our largest trading partner. Low interest rates have an effect on them. The recession, as I just mentioned, in the early 1990s was the reason that the predicted budget surplus turned into such a deficit.

There were some special payments not provided for in the budget of March 1991. There were some special payments amounting to about \$924 million, some of which were made to the teachers' pension fund, the Urban Transportation Development Corp and the Stadium Corp of Ontario.

You can't just isolate these parts of history. You can't just say that Mike Harris is the Taxfighter today when he

was the one who voted for tax increases yesterday. You can't say that the economic benefits that we might be enjoying today are only the result of a tax cut for which we know every single penny is borrowed.

Having responded in that way to the member for Durham East and some of the questions that he raised that deserve some clarification, I'd like to move on in the discussion of Bill 81, this budget bill, to five specific areas.

One is that in the first part of the bill there are some changes to the Ambulance Act. We know that in the budget of May 1998, as my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt has pointed out, there was some significant downloading to the municipalities. He covered very well the amount of that downloading and the effect it's had and will have on municipal taxes.

What I'd like to spend just a couple of minutes on is the idea, the reason, the logic, if there's any, for having land ambulance paid for by municipalities. It doesn't matter what tier it is, as this bill amends, or it doesn't matter who the delivery agent is. It's the idea that land ambulance should be paid for by municipalities.

2030

I always have thought that, as part of our fully accessible, publicly accessible health care system, land ambulance would be part of that, just the same as air ambulance is. As the member for Scarborough-Agincourt said, the government was advised by the Who Does What committee not to put land ambulance on the backs of municipal taxpayers, not only because of the money involved but because of the whole idea that land ambulance is part of our health care system. Whoever would think that land ambulances, when they pull up to the hospital door, are not part of that system?

It was rather humorous to me that in the whole Who Does What story leading up to the downloading of the ambulances I was told of an almost hilarious anecdote, if it wasn't so serious: that the Ministry of Health didn't know that the provincial government owned the ambulances. The Ministry of Health apparently thought, and I assume the minister of the day at the time, that all the ambulance equipment was owned by the ambulance operators. I'm glad they got that clarified. It would be unfortunate if they didn't realize this. For the life of me, I can't imagine how they would have missed that.

But enough to say that I'd just like to raise the question, why is it that we're separating land ambulance service from the health care system and simply putting it on the backs of municipalities? The regulations, the rules are made by the Ministry of Health, and well they should be, so that the type of service that we receive from ambulances is the same across the province. I agree with that. That makes sense. It might even make common sense; I'm not sure. But why you would simply take that out of the health care system doesn't make sense to me. I wish that at some point in time the government would consider rethinking that particular question.

The second point I'd like to talk about in Bill 81 is workplace accessibility. In this bill there is a section that

deals with access for Ontarians with disabilities. It's to encourage business to employ persons with disabilities. The legislation would implement the workplace accessibility tax incentive. This incentive would provide businesses with an enhanced deduction or, if the business is unincorporated, an equivalent refundable tax credit for some of the expenses incurred in accommodating an employee with a disability. The tax deduction for corporations would be 100% of the qualifying expenditures incurred after July 1998 for support services and physical accommodation. The maximum expenditure would be \$50,000 per employee with a disability.

I give the government credit for that. I think that's a good step in the right direction. The problem is, it's not enough when it comes to recognizing the difficulty that Ontarians with disabilities have in getting a job.

When I speak of Ontarians with disabilities, just this past week or so, there was a government bill — first reading was November 23 — an Act to improve the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities. If Bill 81 and the tax credits or incentives that are being given to business were combined with a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act, it would be a huge step in the right direction. I don't like to be cynical. But it would appear to me, if I were a cynical person, that this \$50,000 credit per employee with a disability is some sort of indication that the government wants us to feel they have some great concern for Ontarians with disabilities, and yet they brought in an act a week ago that just doesn't do the job.

I spent an evening at CBC in Windsor when Paul Vasey hosted an hour's program on Ontarians with disabilities. What Ontarians with disabilities need are jobs. They need to be accepted in the workplace and they need to be provided for in the workplace, and not just in a physical way. You have to have the job before you have to have access to the building in which you work. That's the problem.

The act that was introduced a little more than a week ago requires ministers to prepare an annual plan. The bill sets out the contents of the ministries' plans and what they require. But it's with government ministries; it doesn't go to the workplace, where many Ontarians with disabilities want to work, have the ability to work and should be given the opportunity to work.

Even though Bill 81 provides a small benefit to Ontarians with disabilities, I certainly hope the government will bring forth a more meaningful bill that covers the whole spectrum of the workplace, the workforce.

Estate administration is the third item I'd like to cover. Again, my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt has commented on the rather silent way this was brought into being. There were no ministers' statements on it. I would like to refer to some of the statements that have been made by others outside this Legislature, because often that adds some credibility to what we say inside the Legislature. I want to quote from a couple of papers that you'd think would normally, maybe six times out of 10 or a little

more, have some sympathy with the government and what they're doing.

The *Globe and Mail*, on November 24, said, as part of its reporting on this: "The province is essentially replacing the so-called probate 'fee' with a tax and making it retroactive to 1950." Isn't that interesting? Wow. I've heard of bills being introduced during any fiscal year that go back to the 1st of the year — in fact, some of the child care funding is going back to the 1st of the year — but I think this is the first time I've seen one that goes back some 48 years.

Anyway, the *Globe and Mail* said, on the probate fees as they exist now, prior to the introduction and passing of this bill, "Most lawyers agree it now far exceeds the expense of processing the documents." The government has said — it's a term they often like to use — that it's going to be revenue-neutral. What they're saying is that this new tax, this tax to replace the probate fees, all along has been collecting more money than it really should have been.

The *National Post*, one of our new papers, headed their story with "Still Soaking the Dead." Wow. That's a pretty strong statement to come from the *National Post*. It said:

"Even from a legal standpoint, this decision is questionable. The Supreme Court decision reminded us that a tax (as opposed to a user fee) must originate with the elected Legislature, not with unelected bureaucrats...."

"Mr Harris would be well advised to scrap the proposed new law altogether and cut his spending accordingly. If he decides to revise the probate tax, he must confine himself to soaking the moribund. That, at least, would be an honest tax honestly imposed."

2040

My colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt has raised the question, and I think a valid one, that we are now faced with taxes being collected by the government by regulation, and that's the business tax for school boards, for education. That should be the type of issue debated before this Legislature.

I go back to my years on the municipal council. Any time we wanted to change taxes at all — and I'm proud to say that in the last three years that I was mayor, and I won't go further than that, we didn't raise taxes — we had to do it by bylaw. A bylaw had to be presented before council and then there were 30 days before the bylaw could be passed, in which time, of course, the public would have the opportunity to comment on those taxes. Now we're faced with a government that's going to impose almost \$6 billion a year in taxes and we won't be able to say one word, yes or no, about that. That might be something that's going to come back to haunt the government.

Child care: There are portions of this bill which reflect on child care. The Ontario child care supplement for working families is going to combine \$100 million of new federal assistance with the \$40 million from last year's child care tax credit to create a new program. That, as mentioned by my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt, has been in effect since the beginning of the year, but the

families have yet to receive a penny. It's not expected that this part of the bill will receive royal assent before the spring — that was mentioned in a briefing today — and lo and behold, probably the cheques for child care will come out either just prior to or during the election. Now, isn't that a coincidence?

Some were bragging in here this evening about the number of grandchildren they have. Joan and I don't have any grandchildren yet, but I'm pleased to see that there are going to be some provisions for child care and child care expenses. I'm quite happy to help support that kind of thing.

Last, I want to make a quick comment about the Teachers' Pension Act. There are going to be some changes to the Teachers' Pension Act. The problem with that — I think it can best be said from this letter sent to David Johnson, the Honourable Minister of Education and Training, from the Ontario Teachers' Federation:

"The OTF has serious concerns regarding the process used by the government in proposing amendments to the Teachers' Pension Act.

"On October 28 the OTF was informed for the first time that the government intended to unilaterally amend the Teachers' Pension Act. No advance copy of the amendments was provided...."

"The government and OTF are partners with respect to this plan. The teachers' pension plan provides retirement income security for the teachers of Ontario...."

The point of the letter is that they felt that at the very least — and I think this goes for any member of any pension plan in any business in this province — if there really is a true partners' committee to discuss these kinds of issues, the government would have consulted the teachers on these changes. They feel there should be an agreement reached between the partners before any legislation is passed. I think that's a fair request.

Thank you, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to mention these few items tonight.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Christopherson: I want to commend my colleague for his comments with regard to this bill. When we're talking about the impact of the tax measures of this government, which Bill 81 is all about, and start to talk about winners and losers, it's very clear that it's the government's friends and the very wealthy in this province who have done very well by their tax measures, and average, hard-working, middle-class families are the ones who have been stuck.

I found it particularly interesting that in his comments he would mention the Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the absolute insult this government has shown to people who have disabilities, particularly given the fact that they made commitments, very clear commitments, that they would put forward meaningful legislation. At least that's what they said before the election. Now, just prior to the next election, they bring in the feeblest of potential laws, and quite frankly, nothing that the courts hadn't already ordered them to do, nothing that they weren't already committed to do. Anything that really would have

mattered they shied away from, because all they want to do is to be able to say, "We said we'd introduce an act and we have." The fact that it's a do-nothing act and has nothing in it is beside the point. "We said we'd introduce an act and there it is."

It's interesting when we look at the Liberals' red book, the infamous red book that they don't like to have shown around, where it talks about what the Liberals, if they'd been the government, would have done to injured workers, that injured workers somehow aren't disabled persons under the Liberal definition. They were going to scrap the Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation, just as the Tories promised and did. They were going to close the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, which the Tories said they would do and did. Those were measures that were going to help injured workers, help disabled people, not hurt them, the way the Liberals promised.

Mr Young: I wanted to respond to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt on a couple of comments he made earlier. He was referring to the changes in the act that will allow ambulance services to be provided and controlled locally. I want to comment on that, because in the region I live in, when you dial 911, you get three levels of government at your door. You get the fire service from the town — we get it from the town of Oakville — you get the police service from the region and you get the ambulance service from the province. So there you are, with three levels of government. We think there should be a better way. We think we should be amalgamating services and empowering the municipalities to take local control. This bill moves much closer towards that. They can amalgamate the services, they could eventually get to amalgamate the dispatch, and provide better service at lower cost. Now there's a novel idea: better service at lower cost. That's what we're trying to do with the bill.

Mr Phillips talked about the probate taxes, and then he said: "Of course the government can't give up the revenue. We wouldn't do that if we were the government." So I'm not sure exactly what point he was trying to make about that. It's very important to remember that Mr Phillips's government, when they were in power, brought in 32 new taxes. They made up taxes no one had ever heard of before. They put taxes on large buildings. They sat around the cabinet table and said: "Here's what we'll do. Anybody who's got a building over 100,000 square feet, we're going to put a tax on that, because no one will be complaining about that." There was no thought for the people who might lose their jobs because the taxes went up for their companies. They put taxes on parking lots. They said: "There's an idea. We'll put a tax on parking lots, because we won't get many complaints about that."

This bill does the opposite. It reduces taxes to create economic activity.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I'm pleased that my colleagues who opened the debate on this bill, both my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt and my colleague from Essex South, have commented on one of the many factors in this bill, and that has to do with the changes to the Teachers' Pension Act. The member for Essex South

pointed out that the Ontario Teachers' Federation has some very real concerns about the fact that there was virtually no consultation on changes to the Teachers' Pension Act, even though the Teachers' Pension Act is supposed to be a partnership between teachers and the government. The OTF tells us:

"On October 28 the OTF was informed for the first time that the government intended to unilaterally amend the Teachers' Pension Act. No advance copy of the amendments was provided.

"On October 29 and November 2, representatives of OTF were briefly allowed to view draft amendments to the Teachers' Pension Act. They were not permitted to take away copies. This prevented the responsible decision-makers, OTF executive and the partners committee from reaching any informed conclusions."

2050

The OTF makes it clear that in the past, when either partner was considering changes to the plan, the partners met, they had extensive discussions, and they consulted their own and the plan's advisers before proceeding, but this process was not followed in this case. They consider that the presentation of these proposals in this bill is a violation of the partnership.

They go on to note that they can't comment on the content of the legislation, the substance of the changes that are proposed to the Teachers' Pension Act, because they did not at that point in time possess a copy of the amendments.

The same problem should be a problem for this Legislature: We are looking at changes to the Teachers' Pension Act, which is managed by a partnership, which has always been changed through mutual discussions and agreement, and we can't comment on these changes because there has been no appropriate consultation.

I'm also glad that my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt raised a very real concern about this government's continued violation of a Supreme Court decision not to raise taxes by regulation.

Mrs Boyd: I'm proud to have an opportunity to comment on the debate so far this evening. I think those of us who often are here in this place or who watch on television know that the quality of debate is often somewhat questionable, but tonight we are actually talking very clearly about very conflicting notions of what the obligations of government are and what the purpose of budget bills ought to be in terms of serving the population of Ontario. I congratulate the member for Scarborough-Agincourt and the member for Essex South on the ability they have had to identify some of the issues.

I want to deal with one issue that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt raised and that was about the child tax benefit provisions in this bill. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt was pointing out that of course families across Ontario could have been getting this benefit for quite some time, and gave the opinion that the government was simply waiting until it could deliver a cheque that would clearly come from this government that might fool the people of Ontario who have been so hurt by

this government, the low-income families, that this government really cares. The member for Halton Centre spoke out and said, "Of course it'll be by direct deposit."

We certainly don't think that first cheque will be by direct deposit, because of course the government does not necessarily have the information it needs. We know, as the member for Scarborough-Agincourt pointed out, that this provision in this bill will enable this government to make direct payments to low-income families in this province, right at the time they call an election, in an effort to buy their votes.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Essex South.

Mr Crozier: Thank you to the members for Hamilton Centre, Halton Centre, Fort William and London Centre. This is an interesting place to spend your time, because oftentimes when someone gets up you get prepared to thank them for what they said, and by the time they're finished, you're not so sure whether you should or not. But I appreciate the fact that, as the member for London Centre said this evening, we're all here and we're all debating and we're all hopefully to some degree articulating our position.

I just want to reiterate that in the five years I've been here I've seen two governments. I've seen that the government of today was the third party of yesterday and the government of yesterday is the third party of today. I've found myself in the middle all the time, which is not unusual.

My point earlier in the comments was that I guess things change when you're in government because you then expect, "There's no reason in the world why everybody shouldn't agree with me," and that's just not the case, obviously. When the government was the third party, Mike Harris railed about probate fees. When the government was the third party, Mike Harris read off all the lakes and streams in the province. Yet what does his government do since they've been in power? They restrict debate by tightening up, almost strangling us with the standing orders.

I'm simply pointing out to those people who might happen to be watching tonight that we all have to be careful of what we say today because as we can see in practically everybody's comments it comes back to us tomorrow. So I hope we're all sincere in what we do.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr Christopherson: I want to begin my comments, first of all, by asking for unanimous consent of the House to split the leadoff time of the third party.

The Acting Speaker: You don't need unanimous consent any more, but we like to be told, so thank you, that's fine.

Mr Christopherson: I'd think you'd find you might, but that's fine.

Mr Wettlaufer: We changed those rules, remember?

Mr Christopherson: You've changed so many rules, it's hard to keep up with them when every one of them took away some right somewhere. The fact that something

wasn't and that it wasn't a total poke in the eye doesn't stand out.

Let me say at the outset that I want to start by reflecting back on some of the comments that the government members have made, both in their initial leadoff debate and during responses to other debates in the House. What they like to say, and they make it very simplistic, is, "We've cut X number of taxes and we've cut so much red tape," as if somehow just cutting taxes and just cutting red tape automatically, miraculously give us better government and a better province. By that kind of thinking, by that simplistic kind of thinking taken to its extreme, what you ought to do is eliminate the entire budget of the province and, by your theory, we should have a perfect society.

I can see the Minister of Labour lifting his eyes, kidding with one of his colleagues, but I knew it would get that kind of response. I know he's only joking, but it does reflect their philosophical basis, where they would kid with one another and say, "Maybe not a bad idea."

If you were to eliminate all the regulation that existed, by the Tory simplistic theory of how our society ought to be structured, that should give us the perfect rules: no rules. Of course that's ridiculous. But that is no less ridiculous than the idea that standing up and announcing how many tax cuts, in total number, you have made somehow creates a better province as an absolute, because it doesn't. It sure as hell doesn't in Hamilton.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It sure as what?

Mr Christopherson: I said, "It sure as hell doesn't in Hamilton."

Mr Hardeman: I thought that's what you said.

Mr Christopherson: The 30% tax cut: I talk to the people in the new riding of Hamilton West; they're not benefiting. When I ask them on the doorstep, or if I'm out in my riding at an event and I ask people, "How much has the 30% tax cut meant to you, how much of an improvement in the quality of life of you and your family have you seen as a result of the 30% tax cut?" most people say, "Nothing." The odd person will say, "I guess I've seen a couple of bucks."

The vast majority of people say nothing has improved for them as a result of the 30% tax cut. But, boy, let me tell you, people are pretty quick to understand that if someone in Ontario is making \$150,000, \$250,000, \$300,000 or \$500,000 — as much as that's out of the realm of most people who would watch the parliamentary channel to imagine, the fact is that there are those people and they support this government. Why not? When you're making that kind of money and you get a 30% tax cut, you're talking serious coin. Never mind Mike Harris, one loony holding up a can of loonies; I'm talking real money. We're talking about tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars.

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The former minister can sigh all she wants but that's the reality. The very wealthy see a huge benefit from your 30% tax cut. The average, working, middle-class family in Ontario sees nothing in terms of a benefit, but boy, what do they see on the other side of the ledger? Because there

is another side to this ledger, oh yes, and what is it? Hospital closures, school closures — you may have delayed it by a year, but your plan is to go back at it. If by some unfortunate circumstance you should form another government, you're going right back at it. Those schools in those neighbourhoods are going to close. People's property values are going to drop as a result. The quality of life of their children is going to drop as a result. Property taxes in the city of Hamilton have skyrocketed, because you downloaded tens of millions of dollars to our municipal budget.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): Wrong.

Mr Christopherson: What do you mean, "Wrong"? Don't tell me "Wrong." That is a fact. I would remind the former minister, whichever one of them happens to be commenting — they're sitting side by side, and there are two of them.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): Oh, come on.

Mr Christopherson: I didn't name you. I would remind those former ministers that the person who compiled the figures that I use in the House when I talk about your impact, your tax cut, your downloading on to Hamilton, is the very person you just hired as the new Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs. If you want to stand up, as you have done in the past, and say that our figures are wrong or that we're playing some kind of game, go ahead. Go ahead and stand up and hurl that accusation, because the person you're talking about is your new Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs.

To go back to where I was, there are over \$36 million worth of services and programs that this government has foisted on to Hamilton-Wentworth that you didn't cover off, as you promised. The Premier pinky-swore, remember? I guess that's the highest Tory form of oath-taking. The Premier pinky-swore that it would be revenue-neutral, and it's not. In fact, the member for Wentworth North, who is a member of your own government, is on record as saying so. He just got promoted to parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, so you must think his word is worth something, given that that's a justice ministry. He went on record as saying it's true, that the downloading exercise in Hamilton-Wentworth was not revenue-neutral, and he voted against it.

So \$36 million, and our people have to pay for it through increased property taxes. They have to pay for it through increased library fees or reduced library services and increased recreational fees or reduced recreational services. We've got a horrible, terrible strike going on in Hamilton-Wentworth right now that involves the HSR drivers, the Hamilton Street Railway, a really difficult situation, drivers facing a situation where they are justified in demanding that they receive better compensation for the work they perform, and a regional government — I'm obviously oversimplifying and not trying to get into the politics of it, but one cannot deny and it would be wrong for me to run from this issue when talking about your taxation and how it affects my community — that's faced with \$36 million, right off the top, of added costs

that you promised would be revenue-neutral. That's in addition to the problems they've got in terms of new responsibilities for housing because you downloaded it, new or increased responsibilities for public health because you downloaded it. It's the same for social services or virtually every other issue that matters to people in Hamilton-Wentworth, at the community level, where it matters.

You caused that, and all we hear is the backbenchers standing up and saying, "We cut X number of taxes." I want to tell you, there are no regional councillors and no Hamilton aldermen who are proud of what you've done or happy for you or who think you've done the right thing in terms of putting the province on a proper footing. Not one of them, not even the card-carrying Tories, will publicly say that. Why? Because you're the ones who get to run around and say, "We cut taxes and we gave a 30% tax cut." Meanwhile, they're stuck with the bill, stuck with cutting services, stuck with increasing your taxes. Every dollar of that property tax increase in Hamilton is your tax increase. Every user fee increase we see is your increase. Every cut and every harm done to our education system in Hamilton, you have done, but you've tried to set it up in a way that school trustees, whatever is left of that entity, are the ones who have to face the music, community by community. The aldermen and councillors are the ones who are out in the community. These cabinet ministers aren't there.

The Minister of Health rolls in today with another one of her famous announcements, similar to other announcements we've seen — made two or three times, by the way — and money that never seems to show up at the hospital until there's a front-page scandal. Then suddenly there's emergency money delivered by the Premier himself. What a joke. You're not there in our community answering the questions, but my aldermen and my councillors are there. They're out there in our community, on the streets, every day, and they're the ones who get the phone calls from seniors on a fixed income or disabled individuals on a fixed income whose property tax has gone up by \$100, \$200, \$300, \$400. For a senior in Hamilton, \$300 or \$400 comes right out of their standard of living, right out of their quality of life. They've got nowhere to go to bargain up their income to offset it; they've got nowhere to increase prices to offset it. They've got nowhere to go. They get the bill and they either pay or lose their home — that's how straightforward it is — or another family member has to step in and pay it, and in that case their family is affected and now there's less money for their kids.

Oh, but none of your rich friends are hurting. Do you know what probably drives me the craziest about it all? There are polls that show your support level, depending on what poll you follow, anywhere from the 30s to the low 40s in terms of percentage of the population of decided voters who are convinced you've done the right thing. I am convinced that there are people out there who are benefiting from that 30% tax cut to the tune of tens of thousands of dollars, which I mentioned earlier, who are sitting in their big, beautiful homes — and it's nice that they can

have them; the thing I object to is that it's on the backs of people who can't afford it — killing themselves laughing. They're saying: "What a great government. Not only did I get all these tax benefits, but you got rid of those labour laws and got those out of my way — thanks a lot — and those environmental protection laws that were in the way of me doing what I need to do." You've got a third of the population out there saying, "Way to go."

When the history of this era is written, people will wonder what kind of mass psychosis was going on out here that allowed this kind of situation to exist. Let's scratch this a little further, in terms of this great economic miracle you want to talk about. If what you've done is so fantastic, why is it that when we look at the bond agencies, which measure all of us when we're in government in terms of what kind of rating you're going to get and therefore what kind of interest you pay when you borrow money, particularly on the international bond markets, why is it that Standard and Poor's in the last days of the Bob Rae government was at AA-, and as we stand here today under Mike Harris it's AA-? When we look at Moody's, in the last days of the Bob Rae government the rating was AA3. What is it today as we stand here under Mike Harris and the great economic miracle? It's AA3. Why is that? One of the reasons — and it turns the arguments we've heard here tonight on their ears — is that one of the economists who do the analysis for these folks believe it makes any sense at all to be giving any kind of tax cut, let alone 30%, at least until you balance the budget first. At least balance the budget first.

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Here we have a government that talks about how wonderful things are, in the most simplistic and I would say insulting terms, while only a small percentage of the population benefits and everybody else, to one degree or another, loses something, and the bond rating of this government is exactly the same as it was under Bob Rae.

It must just eat at you that in addition to that, the first provincial government in Canada to balance the books was an NDP government in Saskatchewan. It wasn't a Tory government. It sure as hell wasn't you guys, when you give up \$5 billion or \$6 billion a year in revenue, which is what that tax scam costs the people of Ontario. It was an NDP government that balanced the first set of provincial books in the modern-day history of this country. You could have done it sooner if you hadn't done the tax cut.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Why did you do the tax cut? First of all, before I talk about that, let me also remind all these hidebound, hard-line right-wingers who are now backing away from their seats that that same NDP government, the first in modern-day Canada to balance the budget, was also the first government in North America to bring in universal health care. The same government, the same party, the same philosophy brought in universal health care, and they were the first province in the country to balance the books. Not you guys. What are you doing? You are giving away 30% of the tax revenue. Who are

you giving it to? You're giving it to your friends. It's not that difficult to figure out.

Why does Bill 81 make sure the credit is going to be mailed directly to individuals? Because you know now that people have figured it out. You were so arrogant that you didn't believe they could. You thought: "They'll never figure it out. They don't pay enough attention."

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I hear the heckling from one of these jokers beside me, from the Tory rump, telling me, "You don't understand economics." That's how they like to portray things. Anybody who doesn't come from their world —

Mr Wettlaufer: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: He referred to one of my colleagues as a joker, and I think that's totally inappropriate.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Hamilton Centre to withdraw that comment please.

Mr Christopherson: Actually, Speaker, I meant him, and I withdraw it totally.

The reason I responded to the heckle is that that's the sort of thing you were hoping the vast majority of Ontarians would take in, that any time a Tory representative, a member of this government or a supporter or somebody in the corporate community, is put against the wall on an issue of economics, the immediate response is: "You don't understand. What could a poor working person like you understand? How could you possibly figure out this high finance?"

Guess what. They did figure it out, because it's not all that complicated, and they are paying attention to what you're doing. The fact is that the average person knows that the vast majority of your tax scam went to your wealthy friends, and the only reason you're going to mail these cheques out every month is that you're trying to offset that realization people have. That's the only reason you're doing it.

Under any other circumstances you would never cut a cheque directly to anybody out in the public like that. That's not your style. You would have more requirements. You'd have to give a blood test and a fingerprint and a DNA test before you could cash the darned thing at the bank. That's the sort of philosophy and mindset, because you would be so worried that all those plebs out there are going to rip off the system: "We'd better make sure we tighten things up, because they can't just follow ordinary business rules like the rest of our good people. We've really got to latch on to them." No. You have done this in a way that is meant to try to say to people, "See, we care about you."

Well, guess what? This deathbed repentance is not going to do a thing for you, not when you look at the kind of damage you have done to communities like mine in Hamilton and others all across this province. I have said from day one, and I still believe it, that a lot of you backbenchers are in serious trouble when you start going door to door — and I doubt very much that many of you have started yet — particularly in those parts of your ridings, if you have them, where there are working folks, middle-

class folks, not your wealthy pals, not the wealthy folks like those who invited Mike Harris and the Attorney General down to New York for a nice, quiet little trip around Luxuryville; not those folks, but I'm talking about all the rest of the people out there. When you get out there and start trying to defend what you have done with the nonsense you have put forward here, you are going to find out where real Ontario is.

If you stand on the doorstep of someone who took their child to the hospital in the middle of the night and couldn't get the service they needed because the funding to the hospital has been cut and there aren't enough nurses there, and they worried about whether their child was going to live or whether there will be permanent damage because they couldn't get the service they needed immediately, if you talk to somebody on the doorstep who has experienced that and you try to answer that mom or that dad, "Yeah, but we cut 5,000 taxes and we cut almost every single environmental red tape protection in the province," you're going to get that door slammed in your face so fast, and you should. I'd love to be with you on the day that any of you has the nerve to go into an area where real poor people live. Remember them? Remember what you did to them back in June 1995?

Mr Young: Cut their taxes.

Mr Christopherson: There's the kind of joking that we put up with. That was another one of the members from the same area of the rump, and there's a reason they call it the Tory rump. When I said, "What did you do to the poor in June 1995?" one of them thought it was funny to say, "We cut their taxes."

Mr Young: That's right.

Mr Christopherson: No, you didn't. You cut their income by almost 22%. You didn't do that to your rich friends, did you? You didn't do it to yourselves. But it was OK to do it to the poor.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: You can make all the noises you want on the government side. That's what you did. You can't run from the fact that you cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 22% and took great joy in doing it. That's history. You stood up in June 1995 and said you were going to cut the income of the poorest of the poor by almost 22%. I believe it was 21.6%. That's what you did. That is a historical fact. The other fact is that half those people are kids. I challenge you in the next election to go door to door and talk to those people and tell them that what they ought to care about is the fact that there has been a 30% tax cut in Ontario. Tell them that. Tell them about all the other tax measures you've given to large corporations.

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For that matter, once you've finished talking to the poor in your riding — and if you think you don't have any, come on into Hamilton or any other real city and we'll show you that there are poor people in this province — I want to march you into downtown Hamilton where we'll talk to small business people. What have you done to them? Given the absolute fiasco you have made of prop-

erty tax reform, given the fact that we're on our seventh bill after you were told, when you introduced your first bill: "You're going too fast. Nothing is being done properly here. You're going to create havoc. You can't do that much assessment in that short a period of time" — it wasn't even a philosophical issue. It was merely a pragmatic, honest evaluation of the work and the amount of homework that would have to be done to implement the changes you wanted to make, notwithstanding that they were horrible changes in most cases. But if you accepted they were a good idea, and some do, you were still told by those folks, "You can't do it within these time frames."

But you didn't listen. You've never listened. You never listen to anybody. So you marched ahead and screwed it up, and you screwed it up so bad that now we're on our seventh bill. I understand today that now it's got to go to committee because you need to make more changes to that bill because it didn't cover off all the mistakes you made in the first six bills.

And the cap? After you had this huge uproar, outcry, from small business in our community of Hamilton-Wentworth, and there's at least one other member who can corroborate what has happened to small business as a result of your measures — you wouldn't listen to anybody else. You won't listen to teachers, you won't listen to nurses, you won't listen to aldermen, you won't listen to regional councillors, you won't listen to school board trustees. You don't need to talk to anybody, because everybody's a special interest, but once small business started to speak up, then you got a little worried, because you do purport to be and put yourself forward as the party that represents small business. In fact I heard one of your ministers — it might have been the Deputy Premier but it could have been another one — say, "We are the party of small business."

Hon Mr Flaherty: What do you think the Minister of Labour said?

Mr Christopherson: I thought to myself, "Boy, if an NDP government had said that about labour, you guys would have gone off your stick and accused all kinds of ideological nonsense," but you're quite comfortable saying that. The real irony, I say to the Minister of Labour, is the fact that you have hurt small business unlike any other government in the last 20 years.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Let the Hansard show that almost every Tory in here is laughing when I talk about what's being done to small business in downtown Hamilton.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Laughing at you.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Christopherson: That's the issue. What you have done to small business in downtown Hamilton is disgraceful.

Finally, there was going to be some correction in property tax discrimination against small business in downtown Hamilton and in Westdale and in other communities around Hamilton that would start to take steps to correct the unfairness of the tax system they faced. When you

announced your cap, you all but eliminated the majority of the benefit that the downtown of Hamilton and Westdale were finally going to see. If you think I'm just talking off the top of my head, because none of you seem to believe me, then I'll copy you the correspondence from the Hamilton and District Chamber of Commerce, because that's their position. They asked you not to do it. These are business people who understand what that \$36 million downloading on to Hamilton taxpayers and Hamilton business means in the real world.

I have yet to raise the \$17 million that our business community has been hit with as a result of your business education tax. Had you gone to the provincial average in one move, as we asked you to as an element of fairness, instead of the eight years you took, our small businesses in downtown Hamilton and in Westdale and other parts of Hamilton wouldn't have been penalized the \$17 million that the eight-year formula you used means.

After you've finished talking to the poor, after the way you've savaged their standard of living and the education system they need, arguably more than anyone else, and perhaps the health care system, because we know the challenges that people in poverty face, after you've finished talking to them and telling them how wonderful they are because you gave all this money to the very wealthy in our province, and you've cut all these other taxes that had no relevance to them, and you've cut all this red tape, which merely means that protections they had for the environment and other things are now gone, then come on down to downtown Hamilton and talk to the small business people I'm talking about. Then we'll go over to Westdale and we'll talk to those small business people. I can assure you that they will not be singing the praises of your government's tax cuts as they relate to taxpayers in Hamilton.

I see I have only a few more minutes so I will move quickly to one issue I want to make sure I address this evening. I'm sure this will make the Tories feel a little bit better, although nothing's going to make them feel really good at this stage, but maybe a little better. I want to point out that everything I have said about this tax system that they've created, that they have imposed and used to benefit their friends at the expense of average, middle-class, working families is going to be adopted holus-bolus by the Liberals if they form a government.

They aren't going to change a thing. They've said that they think the tax scam has to stay in place. They promise and make speeches promising investment in health care and investment in schools, but they can't tell you where the money's going to come from, other than I guess they're hoping you really will find your surplus. As I mentioned in an earlier speech last week, it is an interesting political situation. You desperately need this surplus to show where you're going to get money to invest, and it's the money they need so they can point to a revenue source, because they have said they're going to leave the tax cut and the tax situation that you've put in place exactly the way it is. They're going to leave it there.

I don't know where taxpayers, small business people, poor people, middle-class people are supposed to find any comfort in what the Liberals are going to offer them in the next election. I don't know what it's supposed to be. If they want to compete with taking care of the wealthy, I suspect the Tories are going to beat them at that game 10 times out of 10, although Jean Chrétien proves that Liberals can give them a good run for their money.

That's a fine point to end on, to talk about what happened when finally the country rid itself of Brian Mulroney. There was a minor interlude there with Kim Campbell, but that really didn't change anything. It was Brian Mulroney the people wanted to go after. When the country so savagely dumped the Brian Mulroney government — and I have some experience understanding that procedure — and they brought in the Chrétien Liberals, what changed? Nothing. The GST is still there. The free trade agreement? Hell, it's not only still there, it has expanded. The tax structure? Still there, same as Mulroney set up. Cuts in transfer payments for health and education to the provinces? Still there; even deeper and quicker. Brian Mulroney himself was on his feet a few months after, within the first year of the Liberal government, praising Chrétien, saying: "Way to go. I couldn't do it that quickly. I'm impressed that you were able you do it so well."

When Ontarians start to look at an alternative in the next election, the Liberals aren't going to offer it. They didn't with the red book. All the stuff that was in the Common Sense Revolution is in this red book that the Liberals ran with in 1995, either exactly the same or just a minor, watered-down version.

You were planning to fire and eliminate what, 13,000, 14,000, 15,000 public service jobs? They were going to do the same to 12,000. Cold comfort, a couple of thousand difference; same philosophy.

You killed the royal commission into WCB. We desperately need real reform of the WCB. They promised the same thing and they would have done the same thing.

You ran and said you were going to kill the Workplace Health and Safety Agency and you did, much to your eternal shame. It's in here: "Kill the Workplace Health and Safety Agency." Same promise. They turned on working people in the last election just as fast as Chrétien did. Make no doubt about it, the Liberals in the next election would do exactly the same thing that you're doing and pretend that it's somehow different. But it'll be no different because at the end of the day, you're still playing to that right-wing argument and that right-wing position that benefits those in our society who already have at the expense of those who don't have and the most vulnerable people in our society.

I have said since the beginning of your term in government that this will be seen as one of the darkest eras in the history of Ontario and arguably the entire country.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2132.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brantford	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Bruce		Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Soins de longue durée, ministre délégué aux affaires des personnes âgées	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Cambridge	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Carleton	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Carleton East / -Est	Wood, Len (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Chatham-Kent	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kitchener	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Cornwall	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Don Mills	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
	Tilson, David (PC)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Dovercourt	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Downsview	O'Toole, John R. (PC)		Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Lincoln	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Munro, Julia (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
	Saunderson, William (PC)	London North / -Nord	Wood, Bob (PC)
Durham East / -Est	North, Peter (Ind)		Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Durham West / -Ouest	Hoy, Pat (L)	London South / -Sud	Smith, Bruce (PC)
	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Markham	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Durham-York	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)		Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Eglinton	Kells, Morley (PC)	Middlesex	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Elgin	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	
Essex-Kent	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Mississauga North / -Nord	
Essex South / -Sud	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Etobicoke-Humber			
Etobicoke-Lakeshore			
Etobicoke-Rexdale			
Etobicoke West / -Ouest			
Fort William			

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)	St Catharines-Brock St George-St David	Froese, Tom (PC) Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)	Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
Nickel Belt	Morin, Blain K. (NDP)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Gary J. (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (ND)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Peterborough	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Port Arthur	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Quinte	Fox, Gary (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	York Mills	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
St-D-G & East Grenville / St-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 1 December 1998

Mardi 1^{er} décembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 December 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} décembre 1998

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): Today is the first anniversary of the passage of Bill 160 and I want to take a moment to reflect on this government's record on education, both in Ontario and in my riding of Oriole.

It's been one year since this government took over total control of our educational system, and what have these changes meant? They've meant cuts to schools and daycare programs that operate in our school buildings.

Parents in Oriole are angry. They're frustrated that the provincial government does not listen to their concerns. They don't want to lose their daycare centres; they don't want them to close. They don't want to see their libraries threatened. They don't want to see money wasted on advertising by this government to sell them that everything is OK.

They're frustrated that the government did not listen to their concerns on the funding formula. Both before and after Bill 160, parents, students, teachers and other community members told you they wanted these changes to the funding formula so that it would not threaten their local schools. They told you they wanted the funding formula changed so that their children could receive bus service again. They were all frustrated when you only made changes on the threshold of an election, not because you've admitted that you need to start again and restore local input and flexibility to the education system, but because you're worried about votes.

This is a day that I will remember — the passage of Bill 160 — and I know that parents in my riding of Oriole will be doing the same. Parents in Oriole know that Premier Dalton McGuinty will repeal Bill 160. I'm sure that on election day the people of Don Valley East will remember that as well.

HIGHWAY ACCIDENTS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise on a very important issue: to request that a coroner's inquest be held into the accident at the Root River bridge at approximately 7:15 pm on Friday, November 20, in my riding. This accident resulted in the death of 10-year-old Linton Muncaster, son of Mr and Mrs Kevin Muncaster of

Desbarats, as well as in serious injuries to a number of other people. This accident was the last in a series of three accidents which occurred within a very short time on the three bridges on Highway 17, the Trans-Canada Highway, on the Garden River reserve between Echo Bay and Sault Ste Marie.

The bridge road conditions were very slippery because of black ice on all three bridges. The one salt truck that was on duty had not traversed these bridges. The first accident occurred on the Garden River bridge and the salt truck was then called out. The second accident happened on the Echo Bay bridge a few minutes later. There appears to be some confusion about whether this accident held up the salt truck. The traffic was allowed to proceed before the salt truck went through and the third accident happened on the Root River bridge, taking Linton Muncaster's life.

A number of questions must be answered: Why hadn't the salt truck spread salt on these slippery bridges earlier? Why was it only called out after the first accident? Why was there only one salt truck, instead of two, on duty in those weather conditions? Is this because of cutbacks to MTO? Why wasn't the road closed by the OPP after the first accident to prevent further serious mishaps? These questions must be answered by a coroner's inquest to determine all facts.

LENNOX GENERATING STATION

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I would like to update the members of the House and congratulate those involved in a unique and exciting project which was officially unveiled last week in my riding with the help of my colleague the Honourable Jim Wilson, Minister of Energy, Science and Technology.

Ontario Hydro's Lennox generating station near the town of greater Napanee, in co-operation with Union Gas, has completed its \$40-million dual fuel conversion project, which will enable the facility to burn natural gas as well as oil in two of its four 550-megawatt units. This undertaking is a first in the energy industry and makes the Lennox generating station a one-of-a-kind facility, offering both oil-generated and natural-gas-generated power.

The successful completion of the project, six months ahead of schedule and on budget, was a fine example of what can be accomplished when the private sector and all levels of government work together in the name of the consumer. Burning natural gas would help lower Lennox's operating costs by about 20%, while helping to reduce

sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and greenhouse gas emissions by about 25%.

Natural gas is expected to be used during the March-to-October period of each year when demand is lower, with the plant switching to oil during the winter home heating season. Lower fuelling costs will help Hydro maintain its commitments to consumers of no rate increases for the remainder of the 1990s, and should strengthen Lennox's competitive position as a supplier of electricity. These are the types of projects which both create and maintain employment in our province.

PLEA BARGAINING

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I have repeatedly, in this House, requested clear guidelines on plea bargaining. The issue was first raised by me as a result of the horrendous deal that was struck in the case of Karla Homolka and her part in the brutal killing of two young women. That deal has been widely called "the deal with the devil."

We pressed for an inquiry into the matter, and finally the Attorney General agreed to one. Mr Justice Patrick Galligan concluded, among other things, that the minister should look at establishing clear guidelines for plea bargains. Subsequently, in response to a question from me in June 1996, the Attorney General indicated, "The senior members in the criminal law division are working on this project, and I expect they'll have guidelines prepared and dealt with." Assurances to that effect were given to me again later that year by the Attorney General.

Yet here we are, more than two years later, having just witnessed the fiasco created by the government and the arrangement last week with Ken Murdock in Hamilton. I see little evidence of the Attorney General acting on his word. While this may not be the most sympathetic case, it is cases such as these that make precedents for the most tragic cases.

Ontarians want a government willing to create rules to bring clarity, ensure public confidence and enshrine accountability in our justice system. This was one of the key lessons in the miscarriage of justice in the Homolka case. It's time for the Attorney General to live up to his office and to his commitment. Stop the delay and bring forward plea bargaining rules, clear guidelines, now.

1340

EATING DISORDERS

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Anorexia nervosa is a devastating disease which ends up being fatal in 10% of all cases. That's why governments must acknowledge the severity of eating disorders in our society and provide necessary health care close to home. Since January 1998, the Sudbury Regional Hospital eating disorders clinic has had a proposal in to the Ministry of Health to provide specialized services to children under 16. This clinic is the only ministry-funded community-based mental health program to provide outpatient, inter-

disciplinary care to sufferers of eating disorders throughout all of northern Ontario. It has served adult clients and their families for eight years now and has a proven track record.

The proposal to the ministry is to expand these specialized services to children. There are no services like this for children north of Toronto. This cannot continue. Because of the desperate needs of children, staff have been trying to help them through the outpatient clinic. But it's high time the clinic received the funding it needs to fully expand its services to sufferers under 16.

A constituent dropped off a letter to me yesterday about this matter, and said of the clinic and staff: "I do not know what we would do without all their support, because as strong as our family is, we could not get through this without the help and counselling they give to help us understand and deal with this. I thank God every night that the clinic is willing to help us even though she is only 16."

This Conservative government must fund this proposal now. It's unacceptable that we do not have services for children north of Toronto.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Community safety is an important issue in my riding of Oshawa, as it is in all of Ontario. I have met with many of my constituents in Oshawa and with the municipality where we discussed the concerns many Oshawa residents have about the safety of our neighbourhoods and our community.

In last spring's budget, the government announced its commitment to investing in new initiatives to promote safety in our communities and helping municipalities hire new front-line police officers to serve in our communities as part of the province's community policing partnership. Last week the province followed up on that commitment by announcing that it would help fund 1,000 new police officers in Ontario to keep the streets safe and protect our communities and families.

The final report of the First International Conference for Crime Prevention Practitioners, held in March 1996, called for partnerships with all levels of government which have responsibilities for policing and program development for community safety. The province's community policing partnership responds to the concerns of the residents of Oshawa and Ontario about community safety and the need for all levels of government to work together in making our communities safe.

For the Durham Regional Police Service, this announcement means that the Durham Regional Police Service would receive up to \$5.54 million from the province for the hiring of 42 new police officers on our streets. These officers represent a net new addition to the strength of our local police force. Putting 42 new officers on the streets of Oshawa and other communities in the region of Durham is part of our commitment to building and maintaining a safe and secure community in which to live and raise our children.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Anyone who thought that Bill 160 was about anything other than removing hundreds of millions of dollars from the education system and centralizing all control of education at the ministry office in downtown Toronto should now be aware that the real motive of the Conservative government of Mike Harris in ramming through their drastic and ill-conceived changes like some human wrecking crew is obvious.

At a time when the Harris regime, like its heroes in the Republican state of New Jersey, was giving income tax cuts which benefit the wealthiest and most powerful in the province the most, it was slashing per-student funding, causing disruption and anxiety among those who deliver education services on the front line.

Schools are closing, teaching positions are being eliminated, budgets for secretarial and maintenance staff have been significantly reduced, and relations between boards and employers have deteriorated badly. The morale in our schools is at an all-time low as educators and non-teaching staff have become yet another target of Mike Harris and his backroom boys who call the real shots in Ontario today, and students around the province see the sorry results.

Yes, Mike Harris, that self-appointed, self-anointed guardian of the taxpayers' dollar, is squandering over \$50 million on blatantly self-congratulatory TV and radio commercials, newspaper ads and glossy pamphlets which seem to arrive in our mailboxes on a weekly basis. Now we know where the slashed budget in education and hospital care is going, to Mike Harris's re-election campaign, and the Ontario taxpayer is picking up the tab.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Today marks the first anniversary of the passage of Bill 160, this government's most destructive piece of legislation dealing with Ontario's education system. To mark this occasion, People for Education will be visiting their MPP's offices between 4 and 5 o'clock.

Unfortunately, I'll be unable to be in my office, and I wanted to take this opportunity to state publicly that I agree with the 15 points about education set out by the Wind-Ex group in my community. I'd like to highlight a few of them.

"(1) Our education system must be fully publicly funded. Privatization of the public education system is unacceptable.

"(3) The province must develop a funding formula based on students and programs, not square feet and dollars.

"(5) Savings from school board amalgamations must be reinvested in the education system.

"(10) The arts and physical education are an essential part of learning.

Finally, "(15) Charter schools and voucher systems must not be introduced in the province of Ontario."

The Liberals say they'll repeal Bill 160, but only the NDP will not only repeal Bill 160 but are committed to

reinvest in public education and have a plan that says how they're going to pay for it. We'd like to see the Liberal plan.

KENNETH K. CARROLL

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): On behalf of my colleague the Honourable Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and member for London North, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr Kenneth K. Carroll, who passed away on October 3, 1998. Dr Carroll was professor emeritus in the department of biochemistry at the University of Western Ontario and a pioneer in the field of nutritional biochemistry. He was instrumental in recognizing the links between dietary components and disease prevention, specifically with relation to breast cancer.

Dr Carroll was born in New Brunswick. He attended the University of Western Ontario, and in 1949 earned the first doctorate awarded by that university. He began his teaching post at Western in 1954 and spent his entire teaching and research career there, developing a lab that became an international training centre. During his tenure, he trained graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, research associates and visiting professors and technologists from across the world, because he had become known as an outstanding chemist and nutritionist.

He was in demand throughout the world to present papers and attend symposia on nutritional links to the prevention of cancer and was the founder of the Centre for Human Nutrition at the University of Western Ontario.

He was honoured with membership as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and received an honorary doctor of science degree from the University of New Brunswick in 1993. He was also presented with a lifetime achievement award of the American Oil Chemists Society.

His significant contributions, dedication and energy made him a highly respected and internationally sought-out —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Let me just take a moment. We have in the opposition members' gallery the member for Huron in the 35th Parliament, Mr Paul Klopp. Welcome back.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Pursuant to the rules of the House, I would like to ask unanimous consent for permission for us to wear the red ribbons today, which are commemorative of World AIDS Day.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE WEEK ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA SEMAINE DU WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Mr Wildman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 86, An Act to designate a week of recognition for the Women's Institute / Projet de loi 86, Loi désignant une semaine de reconnaissance à l'égard du Women's Institute.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The week beginning the second Monday of February in each year is to be proclaimed Women's Institute Week, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Women's Institute. February is a significant month in WI history: In that month, the first branch was formed in Stoney Creek in 1897; Adelaide Hoodless, WI's founder, was born and died; the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario was organized to coordinate the work of the branches; and the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada was organized to work at the national level in that month.

It is desirable to recognize and acknowledge WI's real and continuing contribution to improving the lives of families and communities both in Ontario and throughout the world.

LOWER PROPERTY TAXES IN SUDBURY ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS PRÉLEVÉS À SUDBURY

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act relating to property taxes in Sudbury / Projet de loi 87, Loi concernant les impôts fonciers prélevés à Sudbury.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The bill is going to be entitled Lower Property Taxes in Sudbury Act. It will ensure fairness for all residents of the regional municipality of Sudbury with regard to property taxes, both commercial and private property.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WORLD AIDS DAY

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I rise in the Legislature today and I speak on the occasion of the 11th annual World AIDS Day.

HIV and AIDS have touched many of our families and friends, and I stand in the House today to reaffirm this government's commitment to HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention.

This year's theme, "Force for Change: World AIDS Campaign with Young People," builds upon the momentum of last year's campaign, "Children Living in a World with AIDS." This theme is important for several reasons. Over 50% of the new infections with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, are now occurring in young people in the 10-24 age group. Of the 30 million people living with HIV around the world, at least one third are young people aged 10-24. Every day 7,000 young people worldwide acquire the virus. To put it in very real terms, five young people are infected with HIV every minute.

Secondly, it is youth that are central to any discussion of HIV and AIDS. Today's youth will continue to strive to find a cure for this disease. It will require their vision and participation to reduce the spread of HIV as well as enlisting support for young people already suffering.

However, each of us has a role to play. For young people's participation to be effective, adults, especially parents, must be open to listen and communicate with children. This is a disease that does not recognize age, class or economic status. It is also a disease that is very close to home. The Bureau of HIV/AIDS and STD estimates that as of the end of 1996 approximately 54,000 Canadians had been infected with HIV and 42,000 Canadians were living with the HIV infection. In Ontario, 16,000 people are diagnosed every year with HIV.

This government takes pride in our ongoing efforts to help those inflicted with AIDS. We continue to be proactive in supporting HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives and have made HIV and AIDS care, treatment and support a high priority as a government. This year alone the Ontario government will spend \$51.6 million for HIV/AIDS-related programs. That is \$9.4 million more than the federal government spends for all of Canada. It is important to remember that this \$51.6 million spent in Ontario does not include physician billings to OHIP.

Our funding supports important initiatives like the Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS, the Ontario HIV Treatment Network, anonymous HIV testing and HIV outpatient clinics. Last year alone our AIDS hotline received over 90,000 calls.

These are just a few of our initiatives in our fight to both prevent the further spread of this disease and to encourage communities across Ontario to become more educated about HIV/AIDS.

However, we cannot rest. Later this afternoon, I will be announcing further steps that our government is undertaking to expand our prenatal screening program for AIDS. This will allow us to be even more aggressive in the fight to prevent the spread of AIDS, especially in children.

When discussing government initiatives, it is important to acknowledge the many individuals who have been working in partnership with the Ministry of Health and

this government to ensure that we continue to prioritize AIDS issues within the overall health framework.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr David Hoe of Ottawa, the current co-chair of the Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS, and Dr Anne Phillips of Toronto, the other former co-chair who has recently left the committee, for their invaluable advice and assistance to the Ministry of Health and their tireless work on behalf of the AIDS community.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the work of all other individuals involved with the Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS, as well as all of the individuals and volunteers who are working in their individual communities to try to educate and support those with HIV/AIDS. On behalf of all Ontarians, we thank you for your hours of hard work and dedication to such a worthy cause.

As a society, we must ever be vigilant in our efforts as we continue to work to eliminate the AIDS epidemic. We must continue to fight prejudice, whether in the workplace or in the school yard, we must continue to educate our families and our neighbours about the devastating effect this disease can have and we must continue to offer our assistance and our help to our fellow Ontarians who are suffering.

By working together, whether we are young or old, we can someday hope to knock down all of the barriers that stand between us and a cure for AIDS.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I rise today not with a great deal of relish or pleasure but out of the grim necessity that we need, on World AIDS Day, to be addressing our role in the response to this disease.

Everyone in this House is affected, and maybe to understand that, we need to pretend that each one of us is infected and walk some of the streets and some of the paths that people with AIDS are having to walk right here in our province. We know there are five million people across the world and we know there are 54,000 people in Canada who have been infected, but let's try to bring it down to just one.

For those of us who attended a press conference earlier today and heard from the people from AIDS Action Now, we recognize that we have been deficient. While we have tried to keep this a non-partisan issue, we have to say that this government has been deficient in our response to the dignity and the simple requirements that people have in terms of being able to be provided for in this province.

The minister opposite would do well to listen to what the people from AIDS Action Now said today about having to wait since 1995, when they were promised by your predecessor there would be changes, to have access to the drugs they need to survive. Instead, today, Minister, you are going to make a partial announcement of some of those things that your government promised more than three years ago, almost four years ago.

When it comes to living up to the credentials, the ability for us to be a compassionate society, your and your government's unique job is to represent the rest of us, because you have the power. There is a test for that, and

the test for that is how quickly we respond, how readily we recognize that real people are involved. We heard today from a mother and a young son who receive treatment not because we met the test; they're receiving treatment because they used their credit cards to get the medication they couldn't get easily and quickly through the Trillium drug program that this province has established and this government is now charged to try to approve and make accessible, because it has failed to do that over the last number of years.

1400

We also heard from people who are walking the path that all of us should put ourselves on, because it's the path of people who have an everyday need for our health system. The rest of us sit in fear of having to use an emergency room, a concern of not being able to access services. People with AIDS have to live that on a day-to-day basis. They're telling us and they're telling you, Minister, about home care hours that are being cancelled, about waits in emergency rooms of 24 and 48 hours to be seen when the manifestations of their disease become serious, about recent restrictions in not being able to see specialists for more than 10 minutes at a time except for one comprehensive assessment once in a lifetime. There's heavy irony to that. That's the kind of Ontario health care system you're creating.

Minister, you bear another test in terms of the ability of your government to stand up today on behalf of the rest of us in this province on the issue of AIDS, and that is, testing for AIDS in women who are pregnant. There's been a study in Ontario that is now four years old that told us something very simple: If we're able to make testing available to all pregnant women in this province, we can actually prevent AIDS in a huge number of these cases. I'm sad to report to the House today a study done in this province that talks about 35 preventable AIDS infections on the part of infants because we haven't implemented that. All of us stand reasonably accountable in terms of this not having come about, but it has been on the table, it has been promised, and it has not been delivered.

When it comes to a commemoration of World AIDS Day, when we want to afford to all those who are infected the full rights of citizenship, when we say to those who have contracted this disease through no fault of their own, because we don't subscribe to that, that they have the right of full citizenship, when we say we want to remove barriers, when we say we want to make sure they feel like they belong in this province and in this country, we are measured by our actions. Today, in 1998, on World AIDS Day, we cannot say that the Ontario government has lived up to that on behalf of the rest of us.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Mr Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to respond to the minister's statement, although I would say to you that we understood we had agreement, we had unanimous consent, for a statement about World AIDS Day, not a minister's statement which is a non-announcement. This minister dares to stand up in this House and say that later today she's going to announce something.

Well, the secret's out, Minister, and we know exactly what it is you're planning to announce. You're going to go to Sick Children's Hospital and you're going to announce a prenatal testing program for women. On the surface that may sound like an excellent plan, and it may indeed be in some cases, but there's a little matter of consent. You were told by the AIDS committees and by AIDS Action Now about the issue of unwilling testing and you have not answered those concerns. Furthermore, you have waited to announce this as part of the rollout of your great scheme to persuade the people of Ontario that your government has a new face.

As the member for York South pointed out, in December 1995, in celebration of World AIDS Day, the previous minister promised there would be changes to the Trillium drug plan to meet the demands that AIDS patients and their supporters had made. Those demands were very reasonable.

They pointed out, first of all, that anyone with a chronic illness who is having to pay a deductible up front without having that spread over a period of time creates undue hardship, particularly for those who are low-income earners.

Second, they pointed out that there was no pro-rated system. You pay the entire fee for the year in which you're applying for Trillium drugs, whether you applied the month before the year changes, now August 1, or on August 1. That was another issue for people.

The third issue was the elimination of the deductible payment for those people with AIDS who continue to try and work who are low-income earners or who are on long-term disability plan. Those long-term disability plan recipients are considered earners, so they continue to pay the deductible for their drugs even if their income is at or below the level it would be if they were on social assistance or on the ODSP.

Minister, your predecessor promised this three years ago. Here we are again. Canadian Press announced this morning that you were going to announce a change in this, to have the deductible be able to be paid four times a year. You know from the representations you've had from groups like AIDS Action Now that that doesn't really resolve the problem for low-income earners. So if you plan to try to say you are meeting the demands that have been made, you haven't.

I want to take a moment to talk very briefly about the importance of our honouring those who have acquired HIV and who have full-blown AIDS. Unlike my colleague in the Liberal Party, I don't assign fault to anyone who has this disease, and I think it is important for all of us to understand that this is a scourge on all of us.

We know that the numbers are appalling and we know that prevention is the most important aspect. One of the reasons we're so disgusted and disappointed with the download this government has made is the download of public health services to municipalities, where the possibility is very clear that some municipalities may not recognize the need for ongoing funding for AIDS prevention programs, and where they may try and stick

their heads in the sand and deny that HIV and AIDS is a problem for every community.

We call on you again in honour of World AIDS Day to reverse this foolish decision around public health care and to restore full funding for HIV/AIDS programs from the provincial level so they will be available all over this province. It is the least you could do, Minister, if your fine words mean anything.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to draw the House's attention to the government members' gallery and introduce Mr Andy Watson, the member for Chatham-Kent from the 32nd Parliament. Welcome.

MOTIONS

STATUS OF BILL 72

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting Bill 72, the Inter-country Adoption Act.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the order of the House of November 4, 1998, referring Bill 72, An Act to govern intercountry adoptions and to implement the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Inter-country Adoption in order to further the best interests of children, to the standing committee on social development be discharged and that the bill be ordered for third reading.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1410

ORAL QUESTIONS

DIALYSIS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I'd like to ask you about your recent announcements in terms of dialysis services in this province. In particular, you made announcements recently in Cornwall, Belleville and Ottawa. These were services promised a very long time ago and finally realized. We want to give credit to the member for Cornwall in particular, John Cleary, for his tireless efforts to make sure his community did not receive detrimental treatment.

In awarding those contracts, you decided to give the dialysis contracts to private companies. I'd like to know in the House today why you chose private companies over bids that were put in by public hospitals, which could have used their space already publicly paid for, could have used

some of their ability, some of their staff, some of their support. They could have done that and provided those services. Can you explain to us why you chose private companies to provide these services?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I want to tell you that yesterday was a very special day, because yesterday we saw the benefits of the announcements that the government has been making about making services more accessible to people throughout the province. We had made a commitment to people that we were going to be expanding dialysis services. We had made a commitment that we were going to ensure that we were going to bring services closer to home, and we have done so.

We have announced now the creation of 21 new dialysis centres in Ontario. We are bringing services closer to home. These are people who no longer have to travel hours each day back and forth and then be subjected to dialysis of three to five hours each day. I have to tell you there is universal joy in this province because of the improvements it's making in the quality of life of individuals. Yesterday we had people —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, if you will listen to the question, you will understand that it's not the joy of the hard-pressed, long-waiting dialysis patients in Cornwall, Brockville and Ottawa that we're questioning here. We're asking why you decided to give so much joy to private companies.

Particularly I would like to draw your attention to Bayshore Dialysis in Brockville. I know you were there recently. I'm wondering if you can tell us why Bayshore Dialysis, which receives a fee from your ministry to provide dialysis services, also houses Bayshore Healthcare, owned by the same company, Polar Valley investments, on the same site. Can you tell us whether Bayshore Healthcare pays you any rent for the space they use or is this being subsidized by the money you give them for dialysis?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Maybe the member has forgotten, because he hasn't been here all that long, but it was your government that brought in the Independent Health Facilities Act in the late 1980s under Elinor Caplan, and it was your legislation that paved the way for private companies to operate in this province.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Mr Kennedy: Everyone watching you knows you didn't answer the question; you distorted it. The question was, why are you choosing private health care companies? First you gave it to an American company that had a problematic track record where somebody was hurt in the United States under their service, then you were sued by that company — your own mismanagement of the issue — then you tried to give it to the Kingston General Hospital and now you have awarded it to some other private companies.

Minister, what I asked you is, are you aware these companies are using the space that you pay them for for their other businesses? Also, are you aware that the square

footage being rented is some 30% less than what they're actually telling you is available?

I'll ask you a simple question: Will you open the agreement that you made with Bayshore Dialysis in Brockville to the public so we can see that private companies are not getting any special treatment from your government when it comes to health care?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just remind the member that it was his government that brought in the Independent Health Facilities Act. It was your government that opened the way for private companies to compete. In fact, here's a quote from Elinor Caplan, July 7, 1993, where she says:

"We are seeing them" — meaning the NDP — "force the private sector out of the delivery of health services, all in the guise of health reform, and I will say to the minister, who's here today, that what is important...from my experience as a former Minister of Health is not so much who delivers the service, but the result.

"I believe there is a very important role for the private sector to play in the delivery of health and social services."

I agree. We are taking action today because your government refused to recognize the needs of dialysis patients in this province, and we are moving the services closer to home in order that people don't have to travel and they can have an enhanced quality of life that you —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, official opposition.

PORK INDUSTRY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Today nearly 2,000 pork producers travelled to Queen's Park, along with supporters of their industry, to bring to you the message that indeed their industry is in a crisis situation. They are looking at prices that have not been seen in 30 years. It was 30 years ago that prices were at this very low level. We're here to help, but you have known since July of this crisis.

The producers who travelled here today were hoping for a positive announcement, but they heard nothing. What they did hear was that an announcement may be made in 30 or 40 days. Minister, 30 or 40 days from now will be too late for many producers. You know that other provinces have already taken action. Why do you sit there and do nothing?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): That is somewhat strange coming from a Liberal member. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture has been lobbying the federal government since the summer to put an emergency plan in place. Our hog producers are facing catastrophic prices. You're aware of that. We're all aware of that.

We are working with the federal government. The pork industry is very concerned about countervailing measures which have been applied to them in the past. We want to make sure that the program that comes forth is not countervailing. We must test that program before we

initiate, and we are preparing to provide advance monies to those farmers.

Mr Hoy: Minister, you know that other provinces have already taken action, but this is what we've learned just in the last few moments from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs public service announcement dated today: "The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has established a temporary hotline to provide advice and counselling to pork producers on financial and business management and animal care. The service will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week." Yet another hotline from your government. Is this your response to a crisis within the pork industry?

1420

Pork producers need your assistance now. Thirty to 40 days will be too late. Many farm families are looking at a very bleak situation for this coming Christmas. People at the OFA convention said that almost a year after the ice storm disaster many people have yet to receive any of their relief money. Yours is a ministry of inaction. Will you not assist the Ontario pork producers immediately?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I feel rather sad that the member opposite is against having some moral support for a hotline. If indeed that is the kind of thinking he is putting forth, then I think he should reconsider his position.

He spoke of the ice storm. On January 29 we had cheques made out to farmers at the ice storm. We will have advance funds to our farmers as soon as your federal friends come up with a program.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): We could spend \$10 million a year.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Grey-Owen Sound, come to order, please. Thank you. Final supplementary, member for Prescott and Russell.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): Minister, you say your government understands that this is a crisis situation. You say you met the federal minister last week to foresee a solution. The pork producers came today to hear what the solution was. Your government has ignored the problem for far too long. This help is needed and it is needed now, today. In eastern Ontario, the pork market is in dire straits. Quebec pork producers are overcoming our market, offering a lower price than Ontario producers because of the provincial subsidy they receive.

Minister, stop blaming the federal government. You are the Ontario Minister of Agriculture. Your government must act now. Other provinces have come to the aid of their producers. Ontario pork producers are tired of hearing promises. They need action now. They need it before the whole industry disappears. What will your government do today to ensure the pork industry's survival?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I simply repeat to my colleague from Prescott and Russell, I am in constant and regular contact with the federal minister. He is saying there will not be any program forthcoming until the middle of December. I believe we have to work together. It will be a percentage funded by the province and a percentage

funded by the federal government, as was the case in the ice storm. We will be providing advance funds.

The province of Saskatchewan is dealing with the federal government and they do not want to support any portion of the relief assistance. We're quite prepared to carry our portion, but we need to know from Ottawa what they are going to do.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Correctional Services. Last Friday, the member for Welland-Thorold and I made an unexpected visit to the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. We had heard that there was an unusually high number of mentally ill patients who were languishing in Ontario jails, and we decided to see for ourselves. What we found was much worse than we expected.

We asked to be taken to the male and female segregation units, where the mentally ill are most often housed. In fact, that's what's known as "the hole," and those units are seldom used for administrative punishment any more because so many of the mentally ill need to be kept there for their own safety. Again and again we saw doors with "medical observation" and "suicide watch" on them. The female unit has four of those cells; all four had mentally ill patients in them and three of those were on suicide watch. Similarly in the male units — we visited half of them — there were two offenders who had severe mental illnesses and two suicide watches.

Minister, there are people in those jails with serious mental health problems. When did you become responsible for the mentally ill, rather than the Minister of Health?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I guess I could go back to the member who posed that question and ask, when did she become aware of a problem with mentally ill people in our corrections system? She was a justice minister and a Comsoc minister in the former government, and now she steps up in this House with a typical holier-than-thou attitude of a member of the NDP, suggesting that this is something new. This was identified by the Provincial Auditor in at least two reports to the Liberal government and the NDP government. This is the first government that is attempting to address this problem in a serious and meaningful way.

Mrs Boyd: As usual, this government tries to blame the problems they've caused by hospital closures on everyone else. Minister, we spoke to correctional officers who had worked for over 20 years in the jails, and they told us they had never seen anything like this. They told us how serious this problem is. In 1996, Toronto police alone apprehended people under the Mental Health Act 2,485 times. People who are apprehended that way are put in jail while they wait for trial or assessment. A leaked document obtained by OPSEU suggests that an average of 76 mentally ill patients are detained in Ontario jails under the Mental Health Act at any given time. By your own

estimate, the estimate of your ministry, 15% to 20% of the prison population suffers from severe mental disorders requiring psychiatric treatment.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mrs Boyd: I must tell you that you are responsible, and I want you to tell me, if this is the situation now at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, what's going to happen when those two —

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Runciman: I believe the issue of the number of people who are suffering from some degree of mental illness in our corrections system was first raised by the Provincial Auditor in 1986. The NDP served as the government of this province from 1990 to 1995. I can recall during their years in opposition, with their friends in OPSEU, complaining about deinstitutionalization and the closure of mental health beds in this province. Then they formed the government, and what happened to OPSEU, what happened to the NDP with respect to deinstitutionalization policies in this province? Absolutely nothing.

If anything, they were accelerated. That's a reality. I don't like this holier-than-thou attitude and I don't believe the public of Ontario do. The reality is that this government is doing something about the situation through infrastructure renewal and providing facilities in our new institutions which will effectively deal with mentally ill offenders. We as a government are actually doing something about a real problem, unlike that party across the way, unlike the Liberal government, which had nothing but rhetoric to offer.

1430

The Speaker: Final supplementary, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Talk about a holier-than-thou attitude. You are the government. You are the government that is going out there and closing psychiatric hospitals and opening mega-jails, and you say that's a solution.

These people are suffering from mental illness. They need beds and care, not jails and bars, and that's the only solution you're offering. When we were at Elgin-Middlesex, we spoke to a staff member who used to work as a psychiatric nurse. She told us, "My former patients are now my inmates."

There is a crisis in our jails. When you add closed psychiatric hospitals to overcrowding and understaffing in the jails and you multiply that by mentally ill inmates, you have a disaster that's about to happen.

In 1995 your Premier said that no psychiatric hospitals would be closed. Are you going to hold him to that promise, or are you going to continue putting mentally ill patients in jail?

Hon Mr Runciman: It appears the member didn't receive the message that since 1995 the government has taken steps to add 60 new forensic beds to the system and, in conjunction with the Ministry of the Attorney General, established a consolidated mental health court for downtown, increased funding for intensive case management

services, and expenditures on forensic services are 15% higher today than they were in 1995.

The reality is, of course, that we see a position from the NDP which is consistent with their position in years gone by in opposition and a totally different position from when they were in government. In fact, they accelerated deinstitutionalization of mental health facilities while they were in government and did not provide the necessary community support. This government is going through an infrastructure renewal program in the corrections system. We're going to address the problems of the mentally ill. We're also moving expeditiously to provide the necessary community supports for people who are going through the deinstitutionalization process. We are addressing this problem, a problem that was neglected for many years by both the NDP and Liberal governments.

The Speaker: New question, third party.

Mr Hampton: I would say to the Minister of Correctional Services, you have made a lot of announcements about mental health; the only thing you've done is put mentally ill patients in jail.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of Education. This is the anniversary of —

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Labour, do you want to talk to me?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The leader of the third party gets up and addresses his question to the Minister of Education and then addresses —

The Speaker: I've addressed this on a number of occasions: I don't tell them how to ask the questions and I don't tell you how to answer them. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Minister of Education, this is one year after the date when you forced Bill 160 through the House. We all know now that Bill 160 isn't about improving education; it's about getting the money out of our schools so you can finance your income tax scheme for the most well-off people in Ontario.

Yesterday, I visited the city of Oshawa, Oshawa Central Collegiate Institute, an inner-city high school that is slated to be closed by your school closing formula. Gratefully, the Durham Board of Education voted last night not to close it, voted not to follow your funding formula, but that's going to cost them \$5 million. Five million dollars is what you're going to take away from them now because they didn't close that school.

Your funding formula is pitting community against community. Minister, you changed the funding formula in Toronto. Will you change it for other communities before they have to close their schools?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): It's a little bit difficult to make any sense out of the question from the leader of the third party. The

funding formula applies to all the school boards across the province of Ontario, applies equally to each and every school board across the province. That's the beauty of the funding formula, that it treats every child in Ontario on a fair and equitable basis, allowing for an equal opportunity —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister?

Hon David Johnson: Every child across the province of Ontario will get the same opportunity through the funding formula, whether it's a child living in an urban or a rural area, whether it's a child in a wealthy or a poor community. The injection of over \$200 million — \$211 million, to be precise — in permanent funding affects each and every school board, including the Durham school board. They will realize the benefits of this injection of total, permanent funding into the system to support the maintenance of our schools right across the province.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you can continue with that line, but you and I both know that in places like the Durham board, in places like Kitchener, you're going to force, through your funding formula, those boards of education one way or another to close inner-city schools before they get any funding to increase the size of their suburban schools. It's your funding formula that's driving that.

Your funding formula is also driving scenarios where students who need extra help, students who have special needs, aren't getting those needs met any longer under your funding formula.

This funding formula doesn't work. It doesn't allow students to get the education they need, it doesn't allow special-needs students to get the education they need, and it's going to force communities to close schools. Will you, once and for all, permanently change the funding formula so that schools and education and students are the priority, not getting the money out for your tax scheme?

Hon David Johnson: More nonsense from the leader of the third party. In fact, this government is injecting more money into the education system than ever in the history of elementary and secondary schools. There will be over \$15 billion spent in the education system in the province of Ontario over this school year, as opposed to about \$14.5 billion in the previous year, and do you know what? More per pupil, and more per pupil in the classroom, where it really counts: for teachers, for books, for computers, for professionals to help out, for supply teachers, everything that counts in the classroom — more money for it.

Yes, I'm not embarrassed to say that we will be reducing funding to administration, to bureaucracy, to waste, but where it really counts, in the classroom, there will be more money in every board right across Ontario.

Mr Hampton: You should tell that to parents in Peel, who are now paying extra fees so they can have lunchroom supervisors; or the schools in Dowling that no longer have caretakers; or in Huntsville, where parents are volunteering to teach phys ed because they lost their gym teacher; or all of the parents across Ontario who have

children who have special needs, who are worried that they don't have the educational assistance they used to have.

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Minister, independent analysis of the education funding shows that when you factor in inflation and increases in enrolment, you've actually taken \$883 million out of the funding base. We disclosed your deputy minister's contract a year ago, which said she gets a bonus if she cuts \$667 million in a year. Did you pay your deputy minister the bonus for getting the money out of the schools?

Hon David Johnson: The facts are these: There will be over \$15 billion spent in the education system this year, probably closer to about \$15.4 billion. Last year, 1997, in the education system there was some \$14.4 billion spent in elementary and secondary. There will be an extra roughly billion dollars spent in education across Ontario this year, all up, for all purposes. That money is being directed right into the classroom, where it counts to the best advantage.

We're doing this because education is a top priority of this government. The two most important services to the people of Ontario are education and health care. That's where we need to invest the money, that's what the people of Ontario want to see and that's where we're putting the money for the best advantage of the people of Ontario.

NORTHERN EDUCATION SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is also for the Minister of Education. It is indeed exactly one year since you took total control of all education funding, and for the past year we have had one fiasco after another. I want today to give you one more example of a fiasco that you refuse to fix: your remote and rural school grants.

The member for Renfrew North has already raised this issue with you because his board is not considered to be remote. Now we're learning of northern school boards that you have decided are too densely populated to get any extra funding. Once again, Minister, you have simply goofed up. You have left out huge chunks of northern Ontario from your calculations. I understand that you may never have visited northwestern Ontario, but we could at least have loaned you a map so that you get this right. When will you go back to the drawing board and fix your remote and rural schools factors?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): The member opposite raises the Renfrew Country District School Board as an example.

Interjection.

Hon David Johnson: That's one that you've raised today, and I am pleased to report, for example, that in the case of Renfrew last year, 1997, the funding available to the board was \$74.5 million. This year, 1998, there has been an increase of over \$2 million, to \$76.7 million, including over \$400,000 in small schools grants, recognizing the particular needs of that school board. I might also say that this money, which is permanent money, doesn't include another \$2.5 million over and above that for textbooks.

Interjections.

Hon David Johnson: Mr Speaker, if I can over the caterwauling, another \$2.5 million for textbooks and support for financial accounting through the transition fund. So the board this year will have over \$4 million, almost \$5 million, of additional funds.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary. Member for Kenora.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): Minister, under your formula, the Keewatin-Patricia district board in my riding receives no additional funding — a big, fat zero. It's also very interesting to note that the Nipissing board is receiving more than \$600,000 under this formula. Your formula has simply left out a huge part of land and population that the board now serves without any funding. Your calculations show your total disregard and a great lack of understanding for the geography this board covers, an area larger than France, an area of 75,000 square kilometres.

Minister, I ask you today, will you make a commitment to sit down with this board and discuss finding a solution to the mess you have created? Will you commit to that?

Hon David Johnson: Attempting to hear the question, I believe the member opposite referred to the Keewatin-Patricia board which is projected this year to receive \$1.8 million through the small schools grant and \$4 million through the remote and rural grant, according to the Ministry of Education; some \$5.8 million through the small schools grant and the remote and rural grant.

All I can say is that the ministry staff have worked long and hard with school officials all across the province to establish support that recognizes special needs — special needs in rural Ontario, northern Ontario, eastern Ontario, in urban areas — all the different circumstances. Rest assured, the end result is that in the classroom each and every board, including the board you're referring to, will receive more money for teachers —

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is for the Deputy Premier. He was here a moment ago. Has he left for the day? Do we know?

The Speaker: I'll stand it down. We'll go to the government question and come back.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. I want to ask the minister about some details on an announcement he made in Sudbury last month concerning veterans' long-term care in northern Ontario. Veterans have had a long-standing complaint that they could only receive long-term-care services in southern Ontario, far away from their friends and family. What has our government done to address these concerns?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors): I would like to share with the House the fact that for over a decade, veterans across Ontario have been lobbying provincial

governments past to expand access to long-term-care beds for veterans. In fact, during the two governments between 1985-90 and 1990-95, when 11,000 beds were closed in hospitals in this province, there were also additional beds closed from access to veterans at the Sunnybrook here in southern Ontario.

Our government, recognizing this inequity, finally sat down with the veterans, and we're pleased that we were able to deliver as well as announce the expansion of 96 priority access beds for veterans in 15 northern centres all across northern Ontario. The veterans have received this with great appreciation, because it has been almost 13 or 14 years that they have been asking for this. We're very pleased that these priority access beds are being installed all across northern Ontario.

Mr McLean: I want to thank the minister for the leadership he's shown in this crisis that we've had over the years with regard to taking some real action to solve this problem.

I want you to clarify how this announcement is not part of the additional announcements that we've been hearing from you lately on the first new long-term-care beds in this province in the last 10 years. Minister, I was happy to host you when you came to Orillia to announce 150 new long-term-care beds for Simcoe county. Are any of these new beds you're announcing going to be claimed as part of the veterans' announcement?

Hon Mr Jackson: Previously veterans in Ontario could only receive these services at the three hospitals in Ottawa, Toronto and London. As our government is expanding the 20,000 new long-term-care beds, these additional 100 veterans' priority beds are separate and additional, on top of the 20,000.

What we're trying to make very clear to veterans in Ontario is that when the previous governments turned their backs on expanding long-term-care beds for seniors in this province for an entire decade, they were also turning their backs on veterans in this province. The government, recognizing that, is now expanding as quickly as possible with the announcement of 6,700 new long-term-care beds that have been announced and will be built in the next 18 months in this province. It's a \$650-million investment, one that we're proud of and one that's long overdue for the seniors of Ontario.

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SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Deputy Premier. Each year on December 6 we remember the women who were murdered by Marc Lépine in Montreal.

Now in Ontario there is a very long list of women and children who have been murdered. I can read some of the names: Carmie Jeannot and her daughter Josiane; Vanessa Ritchie and her two children, Tod and Fatima; Fran Piccolo and her children, Jason and Alisha. I'm going to send you a copy of the list. There isn't enough time to read

it all during question period, but I'm sure you would agree that this cries out for action.

I've also got a copy of Team Harris's New Directions: A Blueprint for Justice and Community Safety in Ontario, which your party put out in 1994. Let me remind you of the promise. It says, "Decades of studies have established the need for more shelters for abused women and children."

Deputy Premier, you failed to keep your promise in this respect. I ask you today in memory of those women and children to put back the money into women's shelters and into the front-line community services that women and children —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The leader of the third party asks a very valid and sincere question. He should not doubt the commitment of people on this side of the House towards helping abused women and children.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Why not?

Hon Mr Eves: "Why not?" the honourable member from Hamilton says. Because when I was the Minister of Community and Social Services, I founded the first six pilot projects for homes for abused women and children in Ontario. So you don't have to lecture the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario about the need for such facilities for women and children.

There's not a single Ontarian, I hope, who takes any solace in the fact that there's one single person's name on this list that the leader of the third party has provided me with. The government will continue to do what it can to help abused women and children in Ontario.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Deputy Premier, the facts in the report of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, the facts in the Anne Golden report, the facts in the stories from abused women, the facts from the May-Iles inquest paint a whole different picture than the one your government is trying to sell to the people of Ontario.

Your government has cut the very services that women and children need when they're finding their way out of abusive situations. For instance, you've stopped every dollar of investment in affordable housing. You've cut social assistance by 21%. You've cut money for daycare spaces. You've cut money for training and education that women need to start new lives.

We're talking about the Common Sense Revolution here. It has failed the women of Ontario. I'm asking you today, will you put money back into the services abused women need to help them live independently and get back on their feet?

Hon Mr Eves: The minister for women's issues has seen her budget for prevention of violence against women increase by 13% over the last two years. Arguably —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Just a minute. Arguably you could say that is not enough, that is not sufficient. She's also

announced a comprehensive \$27-million package to reduce violence against women comprising many components with respect to special courts, domestic violence etc.

I can assure the honourable member that as we sit down in the next few weeks to plan the budget for this spring, we will certainly be looking to assist the minister for women's issues in providing further aid to women and children in need in Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is to the Minister of Health. The Saturday, November 28, edition of the Windsor Star, in a column written by Richard Brennan, quoted the Premier as saying, "The opposition continually misrepresent and lie and put out information that is not correct. I have to constantly try and correct that."

Minister, try and correct this. An Essex South constituent of mine named Margaret had an X-ray in August and waited until October for a biopsy that proved to be positive for cancer. She's been anxiously awaiting a scan which will not take place till December 8. Then she must wait until December 14 for the results. Five months will have elapsed and nobody knows yet when her treatment might start. Is this your definition of good care?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As you know, these waiting times related to cancer treatment and related to radiation therapy are totally unacceptable to our government. They have been brought to our attention, and for the first time a government in this province is taking action that was not taken by either your government or the government before. We will be spending \$8.2 million immediately to help ease the radiation waiting list. Some of that money will be used to hire more radiation therapists. We are moving forward to set up a task force that can specifically look at the issue of radiation treatment. It will be responding within three weeks. We are setting up an individual who will act —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — in the capacity of a facilitator with Cancer Care Ontario.

It was our government that recognized the need to coordinate cancer —

The Speaker: Supplementary, member for Timiskaming.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): Minister, one third of the people who live in Kirkland Lake today are without a family doctor. Part of the situation is caused by your uneven incentive program that attracts family doctors away from mid-sized towns like Kirkland Lake and New Liskeard to smaller ones throughout this province.

In Kirkland Lake there are terminally ill patients who sit for hours in the waiting room, because they don't have a doctor, waiting for treatment and waiting for a prescription refill. It's so bad that a trustee at the Kirkland Lake hospital said she would trade places with a

terminally ill patient, to give up her spot with her doctor, so that patient could get treatment.

Minister, for these people time is not a luxury. They need the treatment now. These people are going without treatment. When are you going to allow the mid-sized towns like New Liskeard and Kirkland Lake to use the same incentive programs of salary and benefits to attract doctors to those people who need them?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the member well knows, our government has taken many steps in order to ensure that we can not only increase the access to physician services in the north but also retain the physicians in the north. As you know, recently we introduced a new program for 20 communities in the north and we are providing increased reimbursement to physicians. We're recognizing the administrative costs. There will be an opportunity for physicians now to receive a bonus if they remain in the community for three years. This is an agreement that has been put together by the Ontario Medical Association and the Ministry of Health, recognizing the problems that this province has had for many years.

Our government has introduced many initiatives to encourage physicians to relocate in the north. We have underserved programs. We recently introduced nurse practitioners and we made them available to the underserved areas —

The Speaker: New question, third party.

1500

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Are you aware of the very devastating impact the unprecedented offshore dumping of steel is having on the industry in Ontario? The industry is making a case to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal and you have been silent. Will you and your government support the steel industry? Will you personally, as Minister of Economic Development and Trade, get behind this action?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I must ask the honourable member to repeat the question. Was it the steel industry? I will certainly do everything I can as the Minister of Economic Development, because we understand the importance of all industries in the province of Ontario, especially the steel industry in the northern sector of the province. I will take that under advisement and get back to the member to see what help this government can be.

Mr Martin: To fill you in a little bit on this issue, the steel industry is being faced with unprecedented dumping of steel in Canada as we speak, affecting the communities of Sault Ste Marie and Hamilton and this whole province. They have taken a case to the Department of National Revenue. That department has declared that the case is fully documented. Now we're waiting for them to decide to accept that case and to take it to the international trade tribunal.

I'm asking you here today to get on the phone and call the Minister of National Revenue and tell him how serious this is, because if we don't move now — the Americans are already taking action — the steel that's on the water today coming to the States will be redirected to Canada, so we will be in double jeopardy. The steel industry in Ontario is in a terrible state, while you sit there and obviously know nothing about it. Will you get behind this and call that minister and make sure this action happens as soon as possible?

Hon Mr Palladini: As the member well knows, our government dearly cares about the economic state of Ontario. We want to make sure we do what needs to be done in order to maintain this province strong. This province is becoming much stronger than it was under your administration, when you look at 441,000 jobs that have been created in this province since then. However, back to your question. I have taken that question under advisement. I would be very happy to go to Ottawa personally and talk to the minister of economic development in Ottawa to make sure no dumping is allowed in Ontario in any sector, not just the steel sector.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is to the Minister of Finance. I noticed today in the press that there is speculation that the federal government will be cutting EI premiums by a paltry 15 cents on every \$100 of insurable payroll. What is Ontario's position on this proposal?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I'm sure all members of the Legislature read the reports today, or heard them, about the federal government's purported decrease of EI premiums by 15 cents per \$100 earned. Of course, I hope no member of the Legislature would agree with such a reduction. It will only half-offset the 30-cent increase per \$100 the federal government will be bringing in on January 1 for CPP premiums. At the very least, in my opinion, the federal government should be offsetting the increase in CPP payroll taxes with a reduction in EI payroll taxes by January 1.

Mr Maves: Minister, in essence you're saying that this EI premium reduction will actually be a payroll tax increase after the CPP premium changes. Ontario has always taken a strong position on cutting payroll taxes, especially EI premiums. What is Ontario's stance on this issue, and what benefits would we expect for Ontarians?

Hon Mr Eves: All provinces have agreed that the federal government should be reducing EI premiums by 50 cents per \$100. Every single province, every single finance minister, every single government across the country, regardless of their political stripe, believes that the premium should be reduced to the traditional level of \$2.20 per \$100. By the federal government's own survey and study, this would create over 200,000 jobs Canada-wide. They should eliminate those premiums entirely for youth employees, which would create another 50,000 jobs

for young people across the country. That is what we believe in.

I also understand today that Mr Pettigrew is going to announce some further enhancements to EI benefits. I would hope that the first monies he spends are to bring what the average Ontarian collects — which isn't much, because we contribute about \$5 billion more a year than we take out of the system — up to the national average, at least. The average Ontarian gets about \$415 in EI benefits, but if you happen to live in the Maritimes you get about \$500 a month, if you happen to live in Quebec you get close to \$600 a month, and we're paying the shot here in Ontario.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Health. On June 18 in the Legislature, and again on June 21 by way of a letter to you, as yet unanswered, I asked you to establish a committee to study workplace carcinoma.

Cancer Care Ontario has told you that 9% of cancer deaths are due to workplace environments. If you live in cities like Sudbury, Hamilton, Windsor and Sault Ste Marie, you have a higher risk of getting cancer because of the workplace environment. In northeastern Ontario, statistics show that the increase in lung cancer is 300% higher than in the rest of the province.

Will you listen to what Cancer Care Ontario asked you to do two months ago? Will you announce today that you will establish a committee to study workplace carcinoma and that you will guarantee that this committee will have representatives from industry, from workers' unions and from Cancer Care Ontario? Will you make that commitment and that announcement today?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We are certainly very concerned about any working conditions that contribute to an increased rate of cancer in the province and, as you know, we are working extremely closely with Cancer Care Ontario. It was our government that set up Cancer Care Ontario to ensure that we could coordinate all of the activities related to treatment, to prevention, each and every issue, the issue of human resources, and I can assure the member opposite that we are continuing to take a look and review those proposals.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Minister, I want to ask you about the critical delays in MRIs for cancer patients in the Hamilton-Wentworth area, for someone who is declared to be in an emergency situation and doctors believe that an MRI should occur within 24 hours. Only 40% of these individuals can access that MRI in the 24 hours. In urgent situations the doctors classify that MRI must be done within a week. Fewer than 50% of those individuals can get those MRIs within that one-week period. The Hamilton Regional Cancer Centre, which serves a catchment area of two million people, is the only cancer centre in Ontario that does not have an MRI on site.

In your briefing notes you're going to give me your phony upcoming announcement about two more MRIs for Hamilton-Wentworth. The only problem with that is that your funding formula that only allocates \$150,000 per machine does not come close to meeting the needs. Today, will you commit immediately to funding two additional MRIs for Hamilton, including capital and operating costs for the cancer centre on the mountain?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member knows full well that our government is taking action when it comes to providing cancer care that is certainly very different than his government provided. Let me quote from what happened when the Liberals were in power. This is from the Toronto Star, September 13, 1989: "Princess Margaret announced yesterday it will refuse to treat new patients for six weeks after September 30, 1989, because of a shortage of technicians trained to give radiation therapy." "Patients are dying because their cancers have grown while they're waiting for treatment." That's September 7.

Let me assure the member opposite that we are moving forward, we are providing funding, and yes, we will be making the announcement in order to ensure that whether you live in Hamilton, London or Toronto, we are moving forward. In fact, yesterday I made another announcement whereby we are giving additional funding, as you know, for pediatric —

The Speaker: New question. Leader of the third party.

PORK INDUSTRY

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. You will know that today over 2,000 farmers and their supporters demonstrated in front of this Legislature, asking you to support and fight for a farm income disaster relief program. They don't understand why you're so quiet about it. They see your government howl like a hyena at the Liberals in Ottawa about employment insurance premiums, they see you turn the switch for \$50 million in partisan political television propaganda, but when it comes to speaking up and fighting for Ontario farmers, you and your government are very silent.

I'm going to ask you the same question I asked you last week: Will you not only fight, but fight vociferously, for a farm income disaster relief program, and will you support and contribute to it so that it happens before the new year?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Quite obviously, the leader of the third party was not listening as I was speaking to the farmers gathered this afternoon. Yes, we are working on that program, a program that will go beyond what we now have.

We're now spending \$75 million a year on safety nets. We need a disaster fund and we are in disaster conditions in the hog industry. Yes, we are working on that with the federal government. They are not moving all that rapidly in Ottawa. We are ready.

1510

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Riverdale has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Deputy Premier concerning services for abused women. This matter will be debated at 6 o'clock today.

Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Timiskaming has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning the shortage of doctors in Kirkland Lake. This matter will be debated at 6:10 today.

Dinner is at 6:30.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a petition containing over 800 signatures. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas due to the Harris funding cuts to education, the Toronto Catholic District School Board is being forced to consider the closing of 29 Catholic elementary schools in the city of Toronto before next September; and

"Whereas the parents of the students of Venerable John Merlini school do not want the school closed, because it is operating at full capacity, and fear the further chaos and crisis the Harris government is imposing on the education of their children; and

"Whereas there is apprehension and turmoil in the community that due to government rules to determine school capacity, hundreds of students will have to find a new school next September;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We call upon the Minister of Education, who has the primary responsibility for providing a quality education for each and every student in Ontario, to:

"1. Listen to the views being expressed by the teachers and parents of Venerable John Merlini school students, who are concerned about the implications and disruptive effects the school closure would have on their children;

"2. Recognize the fundamental importance of our local schools to our neighbourhood community;

"3. Live up to its commitment to provide adequate funding for the important and essential components of a good education and not allow the closing of Venerable John Merlini school, because it is operating at full capacity."

I concur and I will affix my signature to it.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have hundreds of letters and petitions here to the Honourable John Snobelen. This one reads:

"Dear Sir:

"During the 1995 election campaign, your government promised to create a system of protected areas that would fulfill Ontario's commitment to the endangered spaces campaign. The primary goal of Lands for Life was to create such a system of protected areas to ensure that future generations would benefit from the wilderness in Ontario that we have today."

I won't read the whole thing. It later says:

"The Lands for Life round table recommendations announced on October 30 have completely failed to protect wild spaces on public land in Ontario.

"There are no recommendations to increase the level of protection within parks or conservation reserves, only to decrease them.

"The round tables failed to achieve the goal of completing the parks and protected areas system, as required by the provincial government.

"The round tables created new designations such as 'enhanced management areas,' 'heritage waterways,' and 'Great Lakes heritage coastlines,' all of which would allow industrial activity, including mining and logging, to continue within them.

"This is unacceptable. The government must reject the round table recommendations."

Later it says, "Please let me know what steps you will be taking to keep your government's commitment to protect our wild places and reduce the risk of serious, irreversible damage to our environment and climate."

This one is signed by L.D. Sweeton from my riding. I will be affixing my name to this letter.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my pleasure to present a petition from my constituents Janie Dodds and Phil Paterson and a number of others to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas heritage is vitally important to the social and economic health of Ontario communities and Ontario residents; and

"Whereas community museums, galleries and heritage organizations work hard to protect, promote, manage and develop our provincial heritage resources; and

"Whereas the provincial government has a responsibility to the people of Ontario to promote the value of heritage and heritage conservation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has abdicated their responsibility for heritage by cutting support to community museums, galleries and heritage organizations; and

"Whereas the Harris government has not implemented a new heritage act that would give communities the ability to better protect heritage sites; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not undertaken meaningful consultation with Ontario's heritage community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide stronger support to

Ontario heritage institutions and organizations and to work with the people of Ontario to establish a new heritage act."

I'm very pleased to present this petition on behalf of the LACAC committee in the municipality of Clarington.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): "Whereas as of April 1, 1999, G-code therapeutic physiotherapy services will not be covered by OHIP; and

"Whereas the only recourse for patients will be through hospital outpatient services that already face waiting lists of three to four months; and

"Whereas these same services are provided in other areas of the province through schedule 5 clinics, which are funded through a \$39-million allocation by the Ministry of Health; and

"Whereas of that \$39 million none has been allocated for northwestern Ontario; and

"Whereas if the delisting of G-code physiotherapy services goes forward and because there are no schedule 5 clinics in northwestern Ontario, there is a real fear that a two-tier system for physiotherapy services will be the norm, in that one system would accommodate those who have private insurance or enough money to pay out of pocket, while the other tier will be one where those in need wait for months on waiting lists while continuing to suffer; and

"Whereas as our population ages, those requiring physiotherapy will increase, and without these services the strain on our medical system will only increase as people aggravate old injuries that were not properly treated through modern physiotherapy treatments; and

"Whereas the delisting of G-code physiotherapy services is further indication that there is a real erosion, by this government, of sound medical services in northwestern Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the planned fee schedule delisting of G-code therapeutic physiotherapy services and provide northwestern Ontario with a portion of the \$39-million Ministry of Health allocation for physiotherapy services."

It's signed by 283 people who are very concerned about this system. I'm very pleased to sign my name to this petition.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public on Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe that no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the

electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in this government;

"We, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition that the Legislature be dissolved and that a general election be called forthwith."

I affix my signature to it.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm very pleased to present a petition to the Parliament of Ontario, and it reads:

"Whereas it is important to honour the courageous memory and sacrifices of Canada's war dead and of our veterans who fought in defence of our national rights and freedoms;

"Whereas there is a need for succeeding generations of young, school-age Canadians to learn more about the true meaning of Remembrance Day;

"Whereas Ontario veterans' associations have created excellent educational materials for use in Ontario schools on the meaning and significance of Remembrance Day;

"Whereas a special Remembrance Day curriculum for all grades in Ontario's education system, developed on the basis of the programs by Ontario veterans' associations and involving their direct participation, would increase awareness of and appreciation for Canada's wartime sacrifices in the hearts and minds of all Ontario citizens;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial Ministry of Education and Training ensure that a suitable Remembrance Day learning unit be included in the curriculum of all grades of Ontario's education system."

I support the petition and affix my signature.

1520

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Given that today is the anniversary of the passage of Bill 160, this is a very appropriate petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas education is our future; and

"Whereas students and teachers will not allow their futures to be sacrificed for tax cuts; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers will not allow the government to bankrupt Ontario's education system; and

"Whereas you cannot improve achievement by lowering standards; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers want reinvestment in education rather than a reduction in funding; and

"Whereas students, parents and teachers won't back down; and

"Whereas Ontario Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty has pledged to repeal Bill 160;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to withdraw Bill 160 immediately; and

"Further, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario instruct the Minister of Education and Training to do his homework and be a co-operative learner rather than imposing his solution which will not work for the students, parents and teachers of Ontario."

I bring this on behalf of all those who live on, in this case, Langlois, Elm, South Pacific.

ADOPTION

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have a petition here signed by residents in the city of Ottawa. This is to the Legislature of Ontario with respect to adoption reform, and I will simply summarize. The petitioners are asking the Legislature to pass Bill 39, entitled the Access to Adoption Information Statute Law Amendment Act. This bill would allow access to birth registration and adoption records for adult adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents and other relatives; implement a no-contact notice option; recommend optional counselling; offer access to other adoption information; and acknowledge open adoptions.

I am in support and will affix my signature to it.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRE

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of about 400 or 500 members of the municipality of Port Colborne. It reads as follows:

"We would like to petition the provincial government of Ontario towards the implementation of a driver's test examination centre to be located here in our community of Port Colborne, Ontario."

It's addressed to Premier Harris, Minister Clement and myself, and I affix my signature in support.

ABORTION

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I affix my signature to this.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have a petition here dealing with red light cameras to make high-collision intersections safer.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas red light cameras can dramatically assist in reducing the number of injuries and deaths resulting from red light runners; and

"Whereas red light cameras only take pictures of licence plates, thus reducing privacy concerns; and

"Whereas all revenues from violations can be easily directed to a designated fund to improve safety at high-collision intersections; and

"Whereas there is a growing disregard for traffic laws resulting in serious injury to pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and especially children and seniors; and

"Whereas the provincial government has endorsed the use of a similar camera system to collect tolls on the new 407 tollway; and

"Whereas mayors and concerned citizens across Ontario have been seeking permission to deploy these cameras due to limited police resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario support the installation of red light cameras at high-collision intersections to monitor and prosecute motorists who run red lights."

I affix my signature to this.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I have a petition here from 26 constituents in my riding. They request the Ontario Legislative Assembly to "urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

I submit this on their behalf.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cut to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place

before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

I have affixed my signature in full agreement with the sentiments.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have a petition signed by many residents within the riding of Ottawa West with respect to certain practices within our health care system, and I am pleased to table it on their behalf in the Legislature today.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 64 people.

"Whereas most Ontario residents do not have adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREATER TORONTO SERVICES

BOARD ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA

COMMISSION DES SERVICES

DU GRAND TORONTO

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 56, An Act to establish the Greater Toronto Services Board and the Greater Toronto Transit Authority and to amend the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority Act / Projet de loi 56, Loi visant à créer la Commission des services du grand Toronto et la Régie des Transports en commun du grand Toronto et à

modifier la Loi sur la Régie des transports en commun de la région de Toronto.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I am pleased to have the opportunity to comment on this bill and want first of all to thank the House for allowing us to defer this particular presentation until today.

I also want to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa West and the member for Nickel Belt, who I know will have their own particular perspectives from their own areas of the Ottawa region and the Sudbury region to add to this debate.

This bill, as we know, deals with the establishment of the Greater Toronto Services Board as well as a new board to govern the GO Transit system in the greater Toronto area, although in terms of the GO Transit system, it stretches even outside of what are generally known as the parameters or the boundaries of the GTA to include even the area of Hamilton-Wentworth, and I want to touch a little bit on that issue as well.

When we look at the greater Toronto area, we know that we are dealing with a geographical area that, compared to the rest of the province, is relatively small, but in terms of the population that it houses is quite significant. There are about four and a half million people who call the GTA their home. That's about 40% of the population of the province. A lot of economic activity takes place here in this area. That is not in any way to take away from the importance of other areas in the province, economically and otherwise, but simply to put this issue in somewhat of a context.

As the minister himself reminded us when he began debate on this bill last week, this is an area that is governed by 29 municipal governments and there has been for some time now a sense about the need to coordinate the provision of services at the regional and local level in a far better way than has happened to date or is happening now.

Obviously the question of governance is central to this bill. It is one of the reasons, I indicate to the government, why we have some serious reservations with this particular piece of legislation. I want to speak at some length about that issue, as well, as I said, as touch on some of the actual powers, particularly the GO Transit piece, in this bill.

1530

It may be for most people out there that the issue of governance is not a particularly attractive one, but I want to bring to people's attention what we have gone through in this place and what that has meant for the GTA as a whole, particularly one half in particular, the new city of Toronto. I go back to the comment the minister made in reminding us that there are 29 municipal governments, at both the regional level and the local municipal level, now functioning in what we call the GTA.

It's particularly interesting that after the changes the Harris government has brought about we now have in the GTA a situation in which roughly one half of that population, that is, the population within the old Metropolitan Toronto and now the new city of Toronto, is now

governed at the regional and municipal level by one local government, the new city of Toronto council, whereas the remaining half of the GTA population is governed by some 28 municipal governments. Am I saying there are too many other governments in the rest of the GTA? No, that's not the point I wanted to make, because while I'm sure there are arguments that could be made, and I would even support some of those arguments, for there being fewer governments at the local level than there are in the rest of the GTA, I am not one to stand here today and say that should happen, but I think a review of that should happen and needs to happen.

What I particularly wanted to underline in making that comparison was why the Harris government has chosen to, in effect, have such a dramatic difference in the way in which they have treated the governance at the local level within the same economic region, the same area in which people cross borders back and forth day to day, both to work and for various other reasons, as they go about their daily lives, and why in the most inner, core part of that greater Toronto area, the government has chosen the rationale that says, "We only need one government to deliver all the services," the ones that are delivered in the rest of the GTA at the regional level as well as the ones that are truly local, yet in the rest of the GTA they have not chosen to apply that same rationale, or even a slightly adapted version of that rationale.

I know the government doesn't want to get into this area in a particularly in-depth way, because if we did, we would have to remind the government and people across the GTA that what drove the government to make the decisions they did were far less reasons about good planning and good governance and were far more reasons and rationales having to do with sheer politics. They chose to pick on Toronto and suggest that there the governance could be done within one massive city council, yet in the rest of the GTA they have been afraid, because they have not wanted to alienate their own political base in that area, to tackle the thorny issue of how you should govern and set up the structures for governance into the next century and the next millennium.

I know that when the minister began debate on this bill he talked a lot about the coordinating function this Greater Toronto Services Board will provide. But he himself, at various points in his own speech, had to admit that there wasn't a lot in the way of powers that were and are being given to this new board. In fact, coordinating services, with the exception of the issue of GO Transit — as I say, I'll talk a little bit about that later in my comments. If you just put that aside for a second, there is nothing but the coordination of services that is being set out through this piece of legislation. Is that a bad thing in and of itself? No. It is probably better than nothing at all, but it is certainly not doing what needs to be done if we as a Legislative Assembly are serious in setting the course for what needs to happen in this region over the next five, 10, 15, 20 years.

This is an area that houses 4.5 million people, that is the heartbeat of much of the economic activity of the

province. The one thing over which there has been common ground in study after study, which the minister and the government have chosen to ignore, is that any serious restructuring of how the region is to function and therefore how the region is to be governed at the local and regional level has to begin by taking into account the reality that the GTA region, however far out you want to draw those boundaries — but if you look at the regional municipalities that now make up that region, there should be a serious restructuring of the governance at the regional level. That is the best and most effective way of reflecting the reality that this region today is now more and more the region, that we no longer have a Peel region, we no longer have a Halton region, we no longer have a York region. Yes, they exist as structures, but the boundaries between each of those regions and the city of Toronto are ones that quite frankly don't make a lot of sense any more to people. They made a lot of sense 10, 15, 20 years ago, but they don't make as much sense in terms of the flow of people back and forth.

It was interesting; I know the minister referred again to the two previous studies that were done, the one by Mr Crombie and the one by Ms Golden. Wasn't it fascinating that the one thing the minister didn't talk about was that in both of those major studies of this very important region of the province, the first priority that each of those two studies set with respect to restructuring, particularly around the whole issue of governance and coordination of services, was that the major issue to address was the regional level of government? They said that's where any restructuring of local governance should begin, and only within that should you then take a look at what we should do with respect to local governments.

That was the point we kept making when we went through the whole megacity debate. That was the advice the government chose to ignore. What we have now reflected in this bill is not even a lukewarm first step towards acknowledging that this restructuring at the regional level has to happen.

We have taken, I want to reiterate today, a very clear position in the New Democratic Party caucus, which is that there should be a serious restructuring at the regional level to lead to, in effect, one regional government across the whole GTA. Our preference would have been that the government would have begun the restructuring of services, the restructuring of governance, by taking that as the first step rather than the amalgamation of the municipalities within the old Metropolitan Toronto. But even at this point, it makes a lot more sense now, having made the decision that the government has made to amalgamate within the city of Toronto, that there be a serious step taken towards amalgamating the regional governments in this new GTA region and dealing with and creating a new regional government, as opposed to the four remaining regional governments that exist, plus the city of Toronto, which now functions as a uniform, both regional and local, government.

That's the way in which the issues that are being dealt with by those regional governments now — the questions

of planning, the questions of managing planning in a way that doesn't simply continue the level of urban sprawl that we have seen, the way to manage the issue of public transportation, the way to deal with the delivery of social services, for example, any and more of those services — all of the issues that deal with people's day-to-day lives, quite frankly in a much more direct way than even some of the things we debate and deal with directly at the provincial level of government, those are the kinds of things that need not just coordination at the regional level, but need an elected body that is responsible politically and accountable to the citizens who live in this part of the province. I'm afraid that we don't have in this bill anything along those lines.

I know the minister and the government want to talk about the importance of beginning this process with this very soft coordinating body, but what we don't see in effect is anything with real teeth, anything that provides for real accountability.

1540

It's interesting that we have gone from the Milt Farrow study that at least provided something of a structure that, in powers, wasn't substantially different from what we have here, but in terms of that balance between the current city of Toronto and the rest of the GTA, it at least provided a smaller body, which I would have thought the government wanted. But in this case the minister and the government have chosen, as a result of further discussions with the local politicians, to go to a body that will have 40 members, and in order to allow representation from each of the councils in that area they've had to go to a weighted vote system to take into account the balance they want to strike between having every council represented, with at least one person on there and some alternates in some cases, and weighing the votes, taking into account the reality that the city of Toronto has roughly half the population base and therefore, on a representation by population basis, that needs to be reflected in the vote.

If you're going to move in this direction, to that kind of structure, I don't have any problems with that. But where I do continue to have a major problem is that while on the one hand this government chose to play a tough role as they saw it, were making the tough decisions around governance within Metropolitan Toronto, they then chose not only not to play a tough role but to completely cave in in terms of any serious restructuring when it came to the rest of the GTA, the 905 area.

I continue to come back to this point, to why this government would not have demonstrated the same courage, to use their approach and their phraseology, that they chose here with respect to the city of Toronto. We now have a situation with the new council in the city of Toronto where, despite the many efforts that all the councillors there and the mayor are making — I may not agree with all the decisions they make, but I do agree wholeheartedly with the efforts I see there to try and make this new structure work — it simply is too cumbersome.

You cannot have a council with over 50 members that has to deal with myriad issues, both regional issues from

child care to social services to transportation, and very local issues such as front yard parking and garbage pickup, and try and do that in a structure that doesn't allow yet a very good balance between the kinds of issues that are more local and therefore can and should be dealt with through what used to be the local councils but now are the bodies that have replaced those at the level of each of the old municipalities — and because there still continues to be this control at the overall city level, there just is an incredible continuing problem there.

What we are seeing is the result of the government not having heeded the advice that was given not just by us but by many in this area, certainly including the Golden study and the Crombie study, which both said that restructuring at the regional level was of foremost importance.

The government clearly is not going to back down from this legislation, although again I find it interesting that at the beginning of this legislative session we had a sense that the government wanted to proceed with this legislation, but then we heard very little about it for almost two months. Now here we are, a couple of weeks away from the House breaking for the Christmas recess, and the government all of a sudden has the full-charge-ahead approach, which is that now they have to finish this legislation in the remaining last couple of weeks.

I'm still waiting to hear and see whether this bill will get to committee, because we have a couple of important amendments that we would like to see put. I thought the minister yesterday talked about the bill going to committee. I hope that's going to happen, although my preference would be that the government not see January 1 as a crucial timeline that they have to now all of a sudden meet, after they've been sitting on this thing for the last year and a half.

The Milt Farrow study came out in 1997, almost a year and a half ago. Then I know the minister wanted to consult with people etc — and that's important; I don't want to deny that. But what we have again is this kind of thing of sitting around and now, all of a sudden at the end, rushing to get it done. This is too important a piece, too important a change, for us to be trying to rush this through, unless of course, as the minister himself indicated, this is just a coordinating body so it doesn't matter.

What I want to say to the government is that you can't have it both ways. You can't on the one hand tell us that this is not another level of government, just a coordinating body, and then say that because it's just a coordinating body it doesn't matter. If it's just a coordinating body, then what you're doing is simply adding another layer of bureaucracy on to the system, which we don't need. If you are adding another layer of government, I have to ask why it makes sense that half the GTA is going to be governed by one council and then be part of this structure, while the rest of the GTA, the other half, is going to have now not one, not two, but three levels of government: the municipality, the regional governments and now this Greater Toronto Services Board.

Either way you go, the rationale doesn't mesh, and it doesn't mesh because the actions of the government simply don't square one against the other and because the

actions of the government have been based not on good, sound planning, not on what makes for good local governance, but indeed have been simply about politics. They thought they would gain political points by picking on Toronto and doing the harshest thing they could do there, and they have been scared as hell to touch this issue when it came to the 905 belt.

I believe the government is making a major mistake, because in doing what they are doing now, they are setting up another body which, as I say, at best adds another layer of bureaucracy to the existing system and at worst adds another level of government, which will mean a third level of regional and local government, for half the 905 belt, and that doesn't make much sense.

If the government intends to proceed in this way, we hope that at least a couple of things could be changed in this legislation. The first is that we would see some sense built into the legislation that this is in fact a transition body. I made the point earlier that we believe some serious restructuring at the regional level is what should be happening. We would be prepared to go to the point of saying, begin a process that over whatever period of time is necessary, if you can't make the decision now to make it effective at a certain point a couple of years down the line, which I believe we can do, but if the government isn't prepared to do that in terms of saying that at some point in time the existing regional governments will be collapsed into one regional government — that's the position we have taken and it's the position I want to reiterate here and offer again to the government and the people of the greater Toronto area that we believe is the most sensible solution over the next number of years.

Can that happen in one step? I think so, but again I say to the government that if you're not prepared to make that happen in one step, at the very least put in place in this legislation, in this bill, a sunset provision that means that by a certain time, two or three years down the road, the existence of this board will end and that something else will take shape, and I believe that something else should be a new regional government for the greater Toronto area. That, I think, is the only sensible solution for the longer term, and even for the foreseeable future.

At the very least, if that kind of amendment were put into this legislation, it would give everybody dealing with this a sense that while this body that is being put in place is not the preferred route that we would go, it at least is seen as a first step towards something else, that something else being a more logical, a more sensible governance level. I would also look at some of the powers that are set out in this legislation in terms of ensuring that even in the short term, there are some greater powers given so that it's not just a coordinating function, that there is an ability to deal, far more strongly than is in this legislation, with some of the problems that have to be addressed.

We see that to some extent with the issue of GO Transit, but in the GO Transit area, and I want to just touch on this for a couple of moments, we see another set of problems. There we have the incredible situation where the cost-sharing that the government wants to perpetuate

by this piece of legislation, I think is unfair towards that inner core of the GTA which is the city of Toronto now.

1550

I don't understand on what basis the government can continue to justify having the city of Toronto property tax base pick up 50% of the costs of GO Transit when about 85% of people who use that service live outside the city of Toronto. You follow any of the logic that this government has used and you come up against this situation. It just does not make any sense. Again, the only rationale is not one that's based on good logic, on good common sense; it's simply one that's based on the politics. The government does not want to be seen to be putting the onus where it should be if they wanted to be fair about this, which is in the 905 area.

I know that there's an issue with respect to the role that the regional municipality of Hamilton plays on this, and they will have a voice and vote when it comes to the issue of GO Transit. I know that my colleague from Hamilton, Mr Christopherson, has addressed at some length the issue and the concerns he has from his perspective in that municipality around the still limited powers that are being given in terms of representation from that part of the province, and I don't want to repeat those but simply to echo some of the points that he was making.

I would just say to the government that what we have here is something that's not a first step towards anything better or greater and at the same time something that will simply add to the cumbersome nature of what we have now. As I watched the kind of hot-and-cold approach that the government has taken to this, if you had asked me a couple of weeks ago, I would have said to people that this legislation wasn't going anywhere. Then all of a sudden we hear again that the government is gung-ho about proceeding with this and that they now need to get this done before Christmas. All of a sudden the rush is on, because I gather some people have said to the government, "You need to get this done."

We would say that the government has not handled this particular issue very well. They've plunged ahead where they didn't need to plunge ahead and they've hesitated where they needed to plunge ahead. Given that they are where they are now, my advice and my recommendation to the government would be twofold.

One would be to put this aside and begin again a proper process that will result in some sensible legislation that sets up, if not immediately, over the foreseeable future, over the next couple of years, a real governance body to deal with all of the regional issues, to reflect the reality that the GTA is now one economic and social region.

If you're not prepared to do that in one fell swoop, then at the very least, I would say to the government, change this legislation, which we can do in this House, so that what this body, the Greater Toronto Services Board, becomes is simply a first step towards that, and a first step in a way that we can actually see the second step happening over the next two to three years. I think it can be done in that way. I think it would lead to some sensible preparation.

I know that government members will probably remind us again of the fact that they have built into this legislation a review process that talks about the review in a couple of years' time of the powers of the board. The minister, I know, talked about that. But none of that addresses the issue that I've been raising, because all of the things in here around the review simply deal with updating on the basis of the population shifts, the proportionate vote between the different municipalities, updating perhaps some of the responsibilities that the board will have, but it will not deal in any way significantly with the issue of governance in a fundamental way.

I would say to the government that if you want to show some leadership, if you want to show some sense that you are looking into the future, not simply as a political party but as the government of the day, if you want to set a course for real restructuring of the way in which this very important area of the province functions and therefore the way in which it is governed, then you cannot simply put in place this very mild structure which will just simply add to the bureaucracy that will have to be dealt with. Whether you say it's another level of government or not, it's going to be there as another layer and it's going to be another layer that people will have to deal with.

The mayors have been meeting now for some time on a regular basis. On the one hand, you're not really adding anything to that kind of coordination that comes from people talking to each other. The only way in which you're going to move into any kind of serious restructuring — and some of the mayors may not want you to do this, but then they're the mayors of their own municipalities or their own region and it's not their job necessarily to see the big picture, although I think it should be. But it is our job as provincial legislators to try and set the course for how this very vital part of the province is to be governed and is to have its services to its citizens coordinated, not just for the next couple of years but indeed for the next 20 to 50 years.

I think that's the point we're at. We're at the point where people understand that as things have evolved over the last 20 to 30 years, there have been good reasons why the structures we have been built up. It is now time to go beyond that. The one piece that is significantly missing from any reform that's taken place in this area is the one area that the government has been most hesitant to act in and that is to create, if not immediately a structure, at least the place and the process that will lead to one new regional level of government for the greater Toronto area.

I can't emphasize that enough in terms of how important that is. I realize the hesitation in terms of establishing that kind of level of government which would have representation for four and a half million people. But I say to the government, if you saw fit to create one municipality here in Toronto in which one council is responsible for services to 2.3 million people, then why not do the more logical thing and build that structure and that accountability at the regional level so that you don't have one regional government pitted against another regional government, as happens now, and one regional govern-

ment pitted against a local municipality, as happens now. You need to have that issue of services sorted out between what is truly local and what is truly regional, and not just public transportation and social services and other kinds of services.

I think the debate and the discussion about which of those services would apply in the kind of structure that I'm describing at the regional versus the local level is still very much something that can be open for discussion. But there is no doubt that in terms of planning and therefore the control of urban sprawl in terms of coordination of public transit, at the very least — and I would argue others such as the delivery of social services and other kinds of services of that nature — it makes sense and that the region is ready for a movement towards that kind of a step and that kind of a structure and that kind of a format in terms of its governance.

If you're not prepared to put this piece of legislation aside and bring something forward that would be more akin to that, then at the very least have the courage to accept amendments or to bring your own amendments to this legislation before you pass it in this House so that you establish some kind of a timeline on the Greater Toronto Services Board. We can also look at strengthening some of the powers that it will be given and, more importantly, set a sunset clause on it with the premise that it will lead to something closer to what I've been describing in terms of a new regional government.

That is what I believe should happen and that I hope we'll have the opportunity in committee to pursue with the minister and with the government. I have no idea whether there is any openness there at all. I suspect that there isn't, but we'll continue nonetheless to make the point, because I believe and we believe here in our caucus that this is the way that we should go in dealing with the future of this very important economic region.

If we do that, then we can build on the kinds of good things that have been happening. I note with particular interest the work of the greater Toronto marketing alliance, the good work that they have been doing in bringing together both the municipalities as well as the private sector in marketing this region as one region to the outside world and not competing between municipalities in terms of attracting business, which has sometimes been a problem in terms of one municipality competing against another municipality, because to the outside world this is one economic region.

Those of us who are part of this region, as citizens — and all of us have a responsibility as legislators towards this region — need to see it and need to respect it for that very vital area of the province that it is and for the fact that it represents 40% of the population of the province. It deserves the kind of looking forward in terms of the structures that is going to govern the services in this area for the foreseeable future.

1600

What this government is proposing to us today in this piece of legislation is just simply not good enough. I hope they will have the courage on this one to come forward as

the government of Ontario and not simply as the Conservative Party that's afraid to alienate in any way its base of support out there. There are ways in which at least this legislation could be improved so that you can set that vision for the future in a way that doesn't simply say to people, "Let's just pass this and then we'll make our friends out there happy."

Nothing really will come of it unless another government steps in and has the courage to make the changes that have to be made. Certainly, I hope that we will have the opportunity as a government to do that. But I also call upon the government, as the government of the day, to take its responsibility and be prepared at least to amend this piece of legislation in a way that sets the course for that next step that has to be done, which is the establishment of a new regional government for the greater Toronto area.

I'm going to stop at that point and allow my colleagues to pick up from there, but I will continue to press this point with the minister and the government in the hope that there is still some small room there for them to listen and to make some changes to this legislation.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I'm pleased to follow on the comments from the member for Dovercourt with respect to this legislation. We are dealing today with Bill 56, An Act to establish the Greater Toronto Services Board, the Greater Toronto Transit Authority and to amend the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority Act.

People may wonder what a member from Ottawa or any other region that's a little distance from the centre of the universe known as the city of Toronto might have to offer to this debate, but quite frankly, there is a great deal of commonality. We are dealing with the whole concept of urban growth and how to coordinate urban growth to best meet the needs of the community and the resources that a taxpayer is willing to provide, recognizing all our interests and all our unique diversity within Ontario.

You would think Ottawa-Carleton, with a population of over 700,000 people and 11 municipalities, pales compared to the issues we're dealing with today that affect some four and a half million people and some 29 municipalities, but there are some similarities.

The fact of the matter is, with this government's downloading provisions giving additional services and responsibilities to regional governments, not only do they already have the existing responsibilities with respect to water treatment, provision of sewer services, major arterial roads, transportation, public transit, the provision of social services, by law, particularly social assistance and child care, all those services that help build a community, but with provincial downloading of services you can throw in ambulances, you can talk about social housing, you can talk about public health and of course the abdication of the provincial responsibility for public transit and road maintenance.

All these things provide not only a greater burden on the local property taxpayer but also a greater responsibility on the local level of government to provide these services.

I have to tell you that in reading through the documentation dealing with this, I was struck by a comment that was made in the Golden report, the precursor to this bill. The Golden task force was established to look at the growth issues relating to Toronto, which brings forward this bill after many deviations along the road. The thing that struck me was the comment that was made that the current greater Toronto area boundaries, those 29 municipalities and five regional governments that we're dealing with, are based on county boundaries established 150 years ago. They do not correspond with the actual Toronto commutershed, the Statistics Canada census, the metropolitan area definition or even the obvious natural boundaries marked by the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine, nor are they aligned with the existing sewershed of pipe water and service areas.

So what we're dealing with here is an attempt to bring in more effectiveness, to modernize the decision-making processes, to provide for more rational allocation of resources to deal with urban growth or even urban sprawl.

In Ottawa-Carleton, I have dealt with this for the past six years as both a city councillor and regional councillor. We went through an official plan process where we updated our official plan to guide growth for the next 20 years, and we dealt with such issues as provision of services.

When we talk about a community, we talk from the municipal aspect of ensuring that when houses sprout in previous farmers' fields, they have appropriate road services, sidewalks, sanitary services — both sanitary sewer and storm sewer — the provision of community facilities, parks, recreation centres and also the provision of excellent transportation facilities so that the taxpayer is not paying out so much more money for more roads and wider roads, but indeed that there is a focus on affordable housing, a diversity in meeting social needs in terms of housing and services, as well as public transit. All these things are important ingredients to build a well-balanced community.

At some point or another, you have to take a look at what are the abilities to provide these kinds of services when you have a complex municipal level of government and you have continuing pressure for more and more growth. Indeed, in Ottawa-Carleton, we moved to a directly elected regional council because we found that issues of accountability were so very important. It wasn't appropriate to have mayors of different municipalities working out deals: "We'll provide the pipe service and road service to facilitate growth in your community, while you'll do the same thing for my community." That "you scratch my back, I'll scratch your back" approach to development was antithetical to well-ordered planning that met the resources constraints that were available and also the ability of the taxpayer to finance it.

One of the things we've discovered, not only in Ottawa-Carleton but everywhere else where there is urban growth, is that there are different forms of urban growth, some more costly to the taxpayer than others. I'm not speaking only in terms of the local property taxpayer but

also the provincial taxpayer. All the same pocket, you say, and indeed this is true, but when we are dealing with the growth of new developments that have to be serviced by major roads and eventually by provincial highways, when we're dealing with inadequate housing and the costs therefore that come on to the provincial taxpayer to provide the support services that should have been put in place when the community was being built from the ground up, all these things are important.

Therefore, when we find the government coming forward with this particular piece of legislation, dealing with four and a half million people, 29 municipalities and five regional governments, and find that in essence the government has wimped out in terms of providing an adequate ability for these governments to represent their communities and their taxpayers, making the decisions and allocating resources according to a rational framework, then it is not good government.

What the government has done by coming forward with this bill is basically emasculate the ability of those communities to work together, go forward and allocate the resources to deal with urban growth.

One reads the bill and sees that the Greater Toronto Services Board is a body that represents the five urban municipalities: the regions of Durham, Halton, Peel, the city of Toronto and the region of York. They allocate representation by population. That's a good start, obviously. It's a fundamental democratic principle. But having put them there, they emasculate them by saying, "If you want to examine the capital budget for GO Transit," — which will now be called GT Transit — "you need 75% of the vote, or if you want to look at picking up some other aspects of coordinating activities, you need two thirds of the vote."

Why are these artificial constraints being put in place? We understand the politics of it, but if you are going to have a genuine planning body that will be able to allocate resources and have accountability, you will want to have a regional government that can make these decisions. But the government, after Bill 103, the megacity bill, has totally backed off. It went through the fire, a very badly put-together process where it ran roughshod over the wishes of the community to develop something.

Then, when they come to the second half of it, the second shoe of dealing with the urban growth problems of the greater Toronto area, they pull their punches. I'm sorry, as the member for Dovercourt said, that this is merely a weak, transitional bill towards something. It requires amendment, requires a sunset clause, is clearly a small step towards more efficient, more responsive, more responsible and more accountable planning that is needed for the greater Toronto area.

1610

The kind of infrastructure that should be put into place requires the coordinated effort not only of the local municipality but the regional municipalities and the provincial government and — we can speak as well in terms of housing — the federal government as well. When you need all that involvement, there is a provincial role in

here and it's the provincial taxpayer who will end up paying for some of the infrastructure decisions that are going to be made by this body.

Let's have a reasonably efficient and reasonably accountable system in place because we don't want to find ourselves at the point where this coordinating service board puts into place urban growth that will require significant amounts of provincial contributions for infrastructure and it's expensive because it was the wrong kind of decision. It has to be a coordinated process, but it has to be an accountable process, and this bill falls far short.

I have to tell you that New Democrats have looked at the whole issue of upper-tier governance at the greater Toronto area. We support strengthened local municipalities with greater responsibilities, but we also know that many of the economic and infrastructure needs facing the greater Toronto region as a whole are best dealt with at the regional level.

Indeed, it is amazing. The member for Dovercourt mentioned it. Here is a situation where the government has put into place, through downloading, responsibility at the upper tier where 80% of the property tax dollar is going towards regional government and about 20% of the property tax dollar is going towards local government. What are they looking after now, dog catchers, stop signs, parks, recreation centres? That is the bulk of the work the local municipality will be dealing with.

There is so much responsibility that has been devolved to the regional level — we acknowledge, of course, that is not revenue-neutral — and we expect that this will be an issue in the next provincial election because some of those issues, the income transfer issues related to social housing in particular — and one could talk about public health and social assistance — will have to be rebalanced in all of this. But the fact is that the regional municipalities are now carrying more of the load. What was the rationale behind this?

When you go back to the Crombie commission, I have to tell you parenthetically that the Crombie commission said that the devolution of such income transfer programs as social housing and social assistance on to the property tax base was both wrong in theory and devastating in practice. If you just look at the history of what happened in Ontario and in Canada during the 1930s, when municipalities went bankrupt trying to meet their responsibilities for social assistance from the property tax base, you know he's right; and if you just simulate through what happened between 1990 and 1994, with that recession, in municipalities with their new responsibilities, again you'll find a tremendous tax burden that can't be met by property taxes. But I am off the topic and I acknowledge that I should focus on the bill at hand.

You have to remember that in dealing with all these issues, if it's that important for a regional government to coordinate these facilities, whether it's in Ottawa-Carleton or any of the other 11 or 12 regions that we have across Ontario, then when we come to the greater Toronto area, with its 29 municipalities and its five regional governments, there has to be a more effective, accountable

process in place to be able to discharge those responsibilities. It doesn't meet, it doesn't match, the model that has been put in place, and there are sound reasons to have direct accountability and to have a means of looking at urban growth, the placement of that growth, the placement of the infrastructure to support that growth and looking at the most reasonable way to do it at the least cost to the taxpayer.

In Ottawa-Carleton, we're looking at a process that's basically pay-as-you-go. We want to have a process in place that when we extend the pipe, when we extend the water — I have to say to my colleagues across the way here that they know that regional municipalities, and local municipalities but I'll focus on the region, have to deal with a balanced budget approach. It is by law that their budgets have to be balanced. When we look at urban growth and we look at the choices faced by regional government — they have to balance their budget, they have to make sure the support systems are in place for social services to serve their existing population, and they're faced at the same time with, "How do we provide services?" whether it's public transit or water or sewer or roads or what have you going out to the new growth areas — there is a tension, a dynamic, because it has to be within a balanced budget process.

Can you imagine property taxpayers saying: "Why should we be subsidizing the infrastructure that's going out beyond in the new areas when we've paid for ours here, we've paid the whole freight here, why must we continue to pay property tax for additional services out there?" We know some people will say, "It's to encourage economic growth." Well, up to a limit, because there has to be some recognition that new growth must pay for itself and that it is inefficient to allow urban sprawl, low-density provision of growth, of housing, that in turn requires greater building of roads and creates a real problem with respect to providing public transit.

You can't have a bus going out running in a sub-development and going by maybe 400 homes in the course of an evening. That's simply a waste of taxpayers' money and you can't provide that service. What happens then is it's all car-oriented. They all go in their cars and drive down. They have to go in their cars and drive down to get a litre of milk and all —

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Walk. It's better for your health.

Mr Cullen: If we could only walk but not drive.

We have all these traditional issues dealing with urban growth. It's important to have a planning body for this area. As a matter of fact, when we look at the whole purpose of the bill, it was in response to the point made by the Golden commission:

"We have reached the point where the status quo" — in the greater Toronto area — "is no longer an option. The GTA needs comprehensive change on a number of fronts. Without it, the region's economic competitiveness and prosperity will decline."

We're talking about the provision of basic services for this area. What we find instead is that the legislation being

provided simply puts into place a forum for better coordination and integration of interregional services in the greater Toronto area. Give me a break. That's not what taxpayers want, a forum where the mayors get together and make deals about where this should go and where that should go. That's totally inappropriate.

What we're looking at here is a means of providing a sensible vehicle to coordinate growth. It's big bucks. There are tremendous pressures by the development industry. There are tremendous pressures by those industries looking to locate where there is the biggest subsidy in terms of the provision of water, in terms of the provision of roads, so that their employees can get there, in terms of nice housing surrounding their business locations, and yet there is a tension there with the taxpayer. It's an important issue. These are important issues that have to be addressed and are not being addressed within this bill.

1620

I want to speak briefly about the changeover of GO Transit. With the government bailing out of public transit across Ontario, this is an issue in Ottawa-Carleton. We're a growing community. As a matter of fact, we are among the fastest-growing communities in the nation. We are now faced with providing from our property tax base the infrastructure to provide good transit facilities so that people can get from their homes to their employment and to the other services they need, whether it's shopping, retail, the public infrastructure with respect to schools or what have you. The government has bailed out completely.

If we were to try to get the most effective investment into transportation facilities, we know public transit is the way to go. It's the biggest bang for the buck because it is expensive to build roads, to widen roads. It's costly to the taxpayer in terms of maintenance and in terms of providing the initial investment, and it's not very good for the environment. We have the downstream costs of congestion, and you get into a vicious circle. The more the roads get congested, the more businesses want to relocate elsewhere, and then the demand for more roads, wider roads and urban sprawl continues and continues.

There has to be a balance. There have to be more effective ways of providing these services, the whole issue of intensification of mixed housing, mixed development and appropriate planning. You can't have municipalities competing with one another, because within a community we all bear the brunt, whether we all have to trot out to Kanata or we all have to trot downtown. It doesn't make sense. We require balanced growth. To get that balanced growth, you need coordination and you need balanced planning. To have balanced planning in an urban framework requires a vehicle that is both accountable and responsible, that provides the money and can be held responsible to the taxpayers for the provision of that money in an open, democratic forum.

If it was good enough 50 years ago to leave growth for the municipality, for that council, and now we are in a modern world where we're dealing with a megalopolis, then we need to extend that system of governance to

ensure that we have that responsible means of making those decisions. This bill doesn't do it. This bill doesn't cut it. It is a board with representatives from five regional governments that meets on a very restrictive matter. How is it going to make appropriate planning decisions? How is it going to have an official plan for the area?

There is an overwhelming need for an official plan so people can understand for the next 20 years where those new developments are going to go, where the people with low incomes are going to find housing, because if there is going to be a factory out there, there are going to have to be people to go to that factory to work, and not all of them are going to be able to afford two cars or a single-family home with a two-car garage etc. These are important things, yet we don't have this vehicle here.

Any GTA governing body must be accountable. We're talking about millions and millions of dollars to extend sewer, to extend roads, to extend bus service, to put into place the schools, the parks, the things that make up a balanced community. No longer can we build simple dormitory communities; it has to be balanced. No longer can we afford to build superhighways to take people from A to B if we have it within our ability to provide employment close to where people live in a balanced manner, so that we aren't all commuting from Hamilton to get up to the car factory in Alliston. People are doing it, but that is ridiculous.

We know that the planning issues that are before us require a more comprehensive approach. The member for Dovercourt, who spoke before me, has made the point that this bill can only be seen as a short, interim step. The member for Dovercourt has pointed out the inconsistency of this approach given what the government has done with respect to downloading on to regional municipalities and with respect to the initiative that was taken in Toronto.

I want to quote from the news release that was put out by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, just to show the benchmark here, the rhetoric that the government puts out:

"The GTA municipalities" — greater Toronto area municipalities — "govern a common community of interest. Development decisions in one municipality often have a profound impact on the infrastructure, housing and environmental protections needed in neighbouring municipalities."

This bill does not meet these requirements that have been set out by the minister, and I hope that the government will rethink it. I will now pass over my speaking time to the member for Nickel Belt.

Mr Blain K. Morin (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure to rise in the remaining two minutes and 55 seconds.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): We want to hear more.

Mr Blain Morin: I would agree. I know that many of the members in the House are probably wondering why the member for Nickel Belt would rise on a bill about the GTA. Obviously, with this government's cut-off of services like Northland buses, I guess I'm not going to be an expert on GO Transit, because when you live in northern Ontario it's really tough when you don't see too many of those trains coming through. But I know this government

can relate to that and will be very kind in letting me speak about those issues.

I believe it's incumbent upon all the members in the House to get up and speak on an issue such as the Greater Toronto Services Board Act, especially as it pertains — and I'm going to try to condense some of my comments — to some of the issues around urban sprawl. The urban sprawl, especially around the GTA, is not only of concern to the people of the greater Toronto area; it's also of concern to all taxpayers and all ratepayers in Ontario, because there are costs associated with it throughout Ontario. It costs people in my riding, of course, and it's something we dealt with and are very concerned about up in Nickel Belt.

I'd like to make a couple of comments about the board itself. One of the things our party is indicating is that the board needs to be stronger and has to have the ability, and the accountability to the public, to deal with issues such as infrastructure and urban sprawl as well as economic development. My colleague has indicated that one of the things they have to have is that autonomy so we can plan for the future. We're really not sure that the power-making ability of the board is going to be there. A governing body has to be able to make those decisions. A services board with no power-making ability is a board that has no decision-making ability.

I believe we need a board that can promote the GTA to the outside world, because when we start looking at the GTA, we have to be able to take the bull by the horns, so to speak, and we have to be able to promote what we've got out there.

My time is up. I would have liked to speak a little more and I would have liked to talk about examples of the regional government in the regional municipality of Sudbury, which is very well run, and I know those members would probably be able to come in and add to this discussion as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the presentations made by the members for Dovercourt, Ottawa West and Nickel Belt. I guess I have more questions than I have answers to the comments that were made.

I found it rather interesting that the member for Dovercourt suggested we should get rid of regional government across the GTA. I'm not sure that the members of the regional council in the GTA would appreciate that. The NDP sees that the best way to solve local government reform is to completely eliminate one of the levels of government. I would question why, when the NDP were in government, they didn't make such suggestions. Obviously the circumstances in the GTA from 1990-95 were similar to today's, and they didn't seem to think that was the appropriate thing to do.

The other area I was somewhat concerned with is that the member for Dovercourt didn't deem it appropriate that every municipality that would be involved in the services board should have representation on the board. He

suggested that there were too many members on the board and that some of those should be eliminated. I point out that the act has a reason for having that size of board, to make sure that we have representation not only by population but that every municipality that would be involved in it would be represented on the board. I think that would be very important for those people, and I'm not sure the people would appreciate very much being totally left out.

The other area that's very important to recognize is that this board is to coordinate regional services, not to provide the regional services, as is being suggested by the members opposite. I think it's very important to keep in mind as we go forward with the debate that that's the purpose of the act.

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The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions? The Chair recognizes the member for Manitoulin-Al —

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): It's Algoma-Manitoulin, but that's actually where I am from. I live on Manitoulin, at Kagawong, and that's a good way to lead into this. Kagawong is a hamlet. Over the last 10 years, the whole township has gone from 400 people to 500 people, and most of that has been because people who had summer residences have converted them now to permanent residences. In short, we have not seen the huge pressures of growth that we have seen in the greater Toronto area.

When I look at this bill and what the government is attempting to do here, in some ways it seems to me that this could be described as a bill to boost the ratings of CITY-TV and Global and all the news networks here in Toronto and the various newspapers, because, being at least somewhat familiar with some of the personalities that will be involved here now and in the future, I can see that there will be at least some minor conflicts between these major players in the regions and the new megacity of Toronto.

I'm very much looking forward to the entertaining debates we will probably see on evening newscasts as the conflicting interests between these regions and the city of Toronto and among the regions are played out on a daily basis. It would help sell the cornflakes on their television programs, but I don't believe it is necessarily the way to approach government, to set up so many conflicts inherent in the legislation.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): This is actually quite an exciting day in the House, because we hear this brand-new position from our friends in the third party. It's also even more exciting because we're hearing the brand-new position from the newest member of the New Democratic Party. It's possible, of course, that the newest member of the New Democratic Party isn't quite clear yet what the position of his party is. Are you just celebrating the anniversary of your first week as a New Democrat? I think possibly that's true.

Mr Cullen: Margaret, you haven't noticed? Where is your card?

Hon Mrs Marland: I am speaking, actually, through the Speaker; I'm not addressing you directly across the floor.

I think it's unfortunate when legislation that really everyone in this House understands the need for is dissected and put in a totally different light, in a totally different perspective, just because it suits the purposes of the debate from that side of the House. Having spent 10 years on that side of the House, I respect the process, but I wouldn't want anyone watching to think that's exactly what this legislation is all about.

It is absolutely logical and needed that we would have a Greater Toronto Services Board to make all the planning decisions, particularly about a seamless transportation system. If you could just understand how GO Transit works, you would then be on the road to recovery in understanding the need for this excellent legislation.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I want to comment briefly on the remarks that have been made with regard to the Greater Toronto Services Board Act. Many years in politics, dealing with different levels of government, lead me to believe that when we deal with a services board act dealing with metropolitan Toronto, there are many mayors around the city who have indicated that there is a need to get together and discuss various aspects of what's happening in the greater Toronto area.

When we look at transit, when we look at what's happening with regard to the Mississaugas of the world, the Markhams of the world, the Pickerings, the whole area around the GTA, sometimes it concerns me that we may be looking for another level of government. Whether we are or not, I'm not too sure, but this piece of legislation sometimes leads me to believe we're looking for Mr Tonks to be the head of it and have 40 members involved in that.

Are we looking for another level of government? That is the question that concerns me. Today in some cases across this province we're looking at amalgamating municipalities and making them into one level of government. Today we have a level of government here. Are we now talking about having another level of government around the GTA? There are concerns, and I think today the discussions will be on whether we're going to have the GTSB or not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for Ottawa West, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Cullen: I'd like to thank the members for Oxford, Algoma-Manitoulin, Mississauga South and Simcoe East for their comments.

I want to start out by informing the member for Mississauga South that the New Democratic caucus did have a position on the government discussion paper on the Greater Toronto Services Board, so this is not a new position or an evolving position but something we have given a great deal of thought to.

Quite frankly, all the comments that have been made about the need for coordination — yes, we agree; that's bang on. The problem is that this bill is so wimpy in trying to meet that need. We're talking about the provision of

infrastructure that's required to accommodate urban growth, the development of communities. Let's just break that down. Here you have this territory of 4.5 million people, 29 municipalities, five regional governments, and you're going to build a new town. What goes into that? Everything goes into that: roads, sewers, houses, sidewalks, parks, lighting, community centres, buses, police, fire, all those things, and there has to be some kind of coordination when we're dealing with such a large item in planning.

This bill doesn't cut it. This bill is a tepid, timid half-step towards the coordination of services that are being funded by taxpayers' dollars, by provincial dollars. This bill doesn't do it. That's the point we're trying to make here. It's an inadequate, insufficient, timid, tepid approach. Yes, there's a need for this. The member for Simcoe East talked about, are we establishing a third level of government? With this coordinating board, it's true. That's not what's needed.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm very pleased to join the debate on second reading of the Greater Toronto Services Board legislation. From a practical point of view the consensus is, from the opinions and the input that have been received on this piece of legislation, which I note went out in draft legislation in March 1998 and was introduced in June 1998, that there is a need for coordination. I think that's a given. What may be at issue is how that's to come about.

The studies of the greater Toronto area by Milt Farrow, Anne Golden, Libby Burnham and David Crombie have all told us that the greater Toronto area is a single community of interests. Golden said that the economic, social and environmental well-being of people across the GTA are inextricably linked, but both Golden and Crombie identified lack of coordination across the GTA as a barrier to the overall economic health of the region.

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That's what's fundamentally important, because the Liberal government of the day between 1985 and 1990 lost a golden opportunity, a tremendous opportunity, to coordinate the growth of this area. Quite frankly, they did nothing. All they did was look for ways to tax, look for ways to put barriers in the way of the true economic growth of the GTA and areas north of it, which is where I reside and the member for Simcoe East resides, in Simcoe county. They robbed them of 10 years of true prosperity in terms of reaching their economic potential.

It's just recently, from 1996 onwards, that we've been able to bring back the realization of the growth that should have occurred as a natural phenomenon of the growth from Metropolitan Toronto around the GTA and into the next sphere of influence, up into the Simcoe county area, because the detrimental policies of the previous government essentially killed economic growth in this province. We basically have dropped the ball for the last 10 years in dealing with service coordination, in coming to grips to make sure economic growth in this area, the greater Toronto services area, is accomplished.

There were comments on whether the GTSB, the Greater Toronto Services Board, will be another level of government. It won't be. The bottom line is that we're looking for service coordination. It has no service delivery responsibilities other than overseeing the operation of GO Transit, which is of fundamental interest, I may add, to my constituents in Simcoe Centre, and to all the residents of Simcoe county. That's a tremendously valuable piece of infrastructure that we lost. It was taken away from us by the previous government in 1992, for reasons that I think weren't sound and were very short-sighted in terms of GO Transit being available to the residents of the city of Barrie, the town of Innisfil and the town of Bradford-West Gwillimbury.

When we deal with GO Transit, what we're looking at with respect to the Greater Toronto Services Board in terms of their responsibility is that they'll oversee the operation of GO Transit but have no direct taxing authority. They cannot compel members to adhere to any coordination strategies they may develop. They will simply encourage and promote better coordination and co-operation among GTA municipalities. Quite frankly, that's what's needed: coordination. When you look at the endorsements that this piece of legislation has received — I will just review them at this point in time.

The Toronto deputy mayor, Case Ootes, indicated on November 25 of this year, "We want the GTSB, because that's the only way we can address the interregion transportation issues, the waste disposal issues and others that have interregion ramifications." The president and CEO of the Toronto Board of Trade states, "The GTSB is needed to cope with the stresses of rapid growth." Don Cousens, the mayor of Markham, states: "We've got to have a way of crossing our boundaries. The public isn't served unless we look for a way of working across the GTA."

In addition, Hazel McCallion, the mayor of the city of Mississauga, states, "Tonks's proposal would 'promote and facilitate coordinated municipal decision-making on issues and services spilling over jurisdictional boundaries.'" Finally, Pat Olive, award-winning Durham region economic development officer, states: "Greater Toronto is one economic region. There is no doubt about that. That is one of the reasons we started the greater Toronto economic partnership."

As I am the member for Simcoe Centre, some may say, "Why would you be interested in this?" Quite frankly, if the service coordination isn't accomplished in the greater Toronto area, it's going to have a detrimental impact on the service requirements that are needed in our area because, quite frankly, the economic growth that is realized in the greater Toronto area directly and indirectly impacts my riding.

Indirectly because a lot of the residents in my riding — for example in the city of Barrie it's estimated that 40% of the residents commute to the greater Toronto area, which is a very significant number. Obviously their well-being and economic livelihood are dependent on the greater Toronto area achieving its true economic potential. Let's

face it, jobs are what people want. They not only want to have their jobs, they also want to have more money in their pockets. But the bottom line is, you need a good job, and obviously the GTA provides good jobs.

Also, from a direct impact, Simcoe county has realized significantly the growth that is being experienced from the GTA.

I just want to comment on the statement made by the member for Ottawa West, which I thought was total nonsense. He said it was ridiculous for someone from Hamilton to commute to the Honda plant in Alliston. Why is that ridiculous? If a person chooses to live in the city of Hamilton, which is a very good city to live in, and they want to work at Honda in Alliston, who are we, in government, to say they shouldn't do that? Why would we interfere in where people want to live? Obviously the infrastructure is there for someone who lives in the city of Hamilton. They've made the conscious decision that they want to live in the city of Hamilton and they want to work outside of Hamilton. What is wrong with that?

People make those decisions every day, as I stated with respect to the commuters who live in my riding in the city of Barrie. They've made that conscious decision to move up to the city of Barrie for the affordable housing, for the quality of lifestyle, but they want to work in the GTA. That's their decision to make and the government shouldn't have any role in the decision-making of where people live. So I take great issue with respect to the premise that the member has stated as to why someone would want to do that.

It's also important to look at why it's important to have this service coordination. I really want to focus on the GO Transit issue. GO Transit as a form of public transportation is invaluable for many reasons. It creates an infrastructure that obviously is needed and it services the entire GTA, all the way out to the city of Hamilton. Quite frankly, if we had it in the city of Barrie, we wouldn't be looking at the tremendous amount of highway traffic we are facing, the tremendous costs that we're looking at in terms of maintaining that highway infrastructure.

Also, there are significant environmental issues that are faced with respect to the automobile being used as a transportation method versus rail. Obviously rail is much more environmentally friendly. I would say that what we should be trying to do in working with GO Transit is to make sure that they can succeed.

When you look at the operation of GO Transit, and I just want to review that for a moment as it would be dealt with under this particular piece of legislation, the Greater Toronto Transit Authority, reporting to the Greater Toronto Services Board, would be established to operate the existing GO Transit regional transit system. The GTSB will be responsible for approving the GO Transit operating budget, major service changes, expansion, fare increases and determining the formula by which GO's costs are apportioned among the GTSB municipalities.

That's fundamental for my area, for the city of Barrie and for all of Simcoe county, because we want to see GO Transit succeed. We want to see GO Transit come all the

way up to the city of Barrie and connect into Simcoe county, because it makes sense for economic reasons. It makes sense for people who don't want to use the highway to go to Toronto and back. It's a very fundamental decision in terms of people who are from outside Barrie who would want to come up and visit the city of Barrie because it's such a great place to reside, visit its waterfront and much more, and they would use GO Transit to do that. But that's something that we have to work towards.

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The GT Transit would supervise the day-to-day operations of the transit authority under the direction of its own board of directors. The current GO Transit directors and chair would be a part of that GT Transit board. But what we're going to see as we move on would be greater municipality involvement in terms of the operation.

What we have to understand is that GO Transit is serving one large economic community and, quite frankly, if we really wanted to see it serve the economic region properly, it wouldn't be just restricted to the city of Toronto and the 905 areas; it would go as far out as the city of Kitchener and up to the city of Barrie to reach our true economic potential, because that's what investors look at in terms of your highway infrastructure and also your rail infrastructure, and that's something that's missing at this point in time.

The point that is made is, if we reach our economic growth potential in terms of all the economic growth that can be reached in the city of Mississauga and the areas around Metropolitan Toronto, you have to go out further. If you don't have the infrastructure in place and GO Transit reaching out as far as the city of Barrie, you've lost a vital link in terms of relying on truck transportation for everything.

It's fundamental, because the GTA is one large economic community. The benefits of efficient transit across the entire area are felt beyond the riders. The downtown businesses that employ those riders or depend on them as customers all benefit. GO Transit has a positive effect on the economic health of the entire GTA inside Toronto and in the 905 regions. Its potential for expansion because of the economic growth that is being realized through the policies of the Harris government, which has set up an economic environment second to none in this country — because the economic growth that is being accomplished through this country is certainly not through federal policies. Quite frankly, people are more heavily taxed by the federal government in terms of no protection through indexation of the income they earn because we have bracket creep, through an increase in CPP and through the failure to address UI. This has resulted in people not having as much money in their pockets as in 1989, because of federal policies.

What they basically have done is eaten up the 30% income tax cut that we have provided through very prudent fiscal management. The bottom line is that the federal government has basically abdicated their respon-

sibility with respect to rail funding and rail transportation in this province.

We're not looking for any help from the federal government. We're certainly not looking for them to put barriers in the place of economic growth in this area because we would all be far better off if they basically worked with the provinces, and especially this government, in terms of giving taxpayers their money back. They seem to think it's their money.

The interesting note that has been brought out is that in the last six months the federal government has realized a \$10-billion surplus. If we aren't overtaxed, where did they get all the money? All it has come from is basically the economic growth that's been achieved. Does the common person achieve a better situation with respect to the money they take home? No, because they haven't done anything to deal with bracket creep. There's no indexation if you move up in terms of an income level. What they have done is increased CPP to the point where it will be up 10%, and they've done nothing in terms of the UI surplus.

So the economic potential for this area is far greater if we find the federal government getting in line with the policies of the Mike Harris government. They seem to forget that the province of Ontario doesn't compete with Quebec, it doesn't compete with Manitoba; it basically competes with the state of Michigan, the state of Ohio and the state of Indiana and, quite frankly, their policies are geared to making sure that the economic prosperity of the regions is achieved. They're not fighting with the federal government in the United States in terms of achieving their economic growth, because their unemployment rates are about one third the level that ours are. They're looking at 3% and 4% unemployment. We should be putting in place economic policies that encourage economic growth. That's really the focus, making sure we can better serve the needs of the people who live in Metropolitan Toronto and the GTA, making sure that service in transportation or whatever other services they need are there. But the bottom line is that the economic health of the entire GTA, the city of Toronto and the 905 region fundamentally impacts the entire province. That is the bottom line.

GO Transit, as I commented, is certainly a fundamental transportation link to the GTA and the city of Toronto and also to the areas where they should be reaching beyond. That is something we're going to value tremendously in the future of this province, not only for environmental reasons but also because we have to focus on creating a rail system. In the United States, that's where they're focusing. In the public sector, they realize the importance of rail in their heavy industrialized areas and their heavily populated areas. What are we doing in this country? The federal government has decided that they're getting out of the rail industry, especially in the province of Ontario. They've given CN and CP the green light to abandon rail all across this province. Where are they abandoning it? They're looking at abandoning the line between Bradford and Barrie.

We looked to work on this fundamental problem, because that's so short-sighted for CN to be leaving that

particular area. Fortunately, the city of Barrie and the province have been able to work together and are looking to a resolution to this by purchasing that particular rail line.

Where's the federal government on this? They're basically saying: "It's not our responsibility. That's a provincial rail line." I've never heard such nonsense in my life. When did the railways become provincial? They've never been provincial; they've been a federal responsibility, regulated companies such as CN and CP. Those are federally regulated companies; they're the only companies that are involved in major transportation for rail.

Interjection: What do they collect for gas taxes?

Mr Tascona: That's another point, gas tax. What does the federal government collect in gas tax? What do they put back into the highway system of this province? They don't put back anything in terms of what they take out, but they say we have to be a part of this. Why don't they give back that money so they can increase and improve the infrastructure of this province?

The bottom line in dealing with the services we need is that setting up this Greater Toronto Services Board is fundamental. The federal government could play a significant role in terms of getting back and showing they're responsible by supporting the rail system and also supporting the highway infrastructure by giving us a fair shake on gas taxes.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have found it very amusing in the last couple of weeks or so that the members on the government side seem more interested in attacking the federal government than in dealing with the issues they ought to be dealing with here in this chamber. It just goes on and on. We heard it today with respect to the pork producers; now we're hearing it with respect to rail transportation. It almost seems to be on a continual basis. Why don't we stop this politics of blame?

If you want to talk about downloading, how about all the downloading you people have done on local municipalities? What are you doing, for example, about housing in this province? You have done absolutely nothing over the last three to four years. As we hear in report after report, there are more homeless in this province than ever before, people who are in absolutely desperate situations.

Mr Baird: How much money do you want to spend on social housing? Say, "I will spend X number of dollars."

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, you'll have your turn.

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Mr Gerretsen: So don't you talk about what the federal government ought to be doing and is not doing, because you're doing exactly the same thing. You're downloading all of your responsibilities upon the local level of government.

What I find interesting is that we tend to forget in all this that the reason the province got involved in all these different programs that they're now downloading on local municipalities is because municipalities simply would not

have the financial wherewithal, the financial capacity, to get involved in a lot of these programs if not for the subsidy dollars that used to come from the province.

As far as this particular bill is concerned, it is a step in the right direction, but as I said last week, it is only a very small, little step. If you want to make this board meaningful, you've got to give it more powers.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I would also like to comment on the remarks of the member for Simcoe Centre and focus my remarks on downloading but take just a little different tack.

First of all, as much as the member — and I jotted down the quote when he said it. When he said he wanted to focus on GO as an issue, he said it was “invaluable and provides service that is needed.” But the reality is that they, the Harris government, downloaded and dumped their responsibility for GO down to municipalities — the whole shot. They downloaded it. As I mentioned in this House last week, the difficulty for municipalities like mine in Hamilton is that as a result of other downloading we're over \$36 million in the hole in terms of the services you've downloaded and the offsetting money you've provided. We're out \$36 million.

GO is one of those areas that we're now expected to carry. When the member talks, on behalf of the government, about the need for GO service and public transit, they're empty words, because the commitment of dollars is gone. They've downloaded that to municipalities, so when we see the pressure build for expanding GO Transit and other forms of public transit, it's on the municipalities, which had the smallest base and the smallest amount of income to work with in the first place to pay for the responsibilities they had before, and now they're totally overwhelmed. The kind of expansion that we ought to see in GO is just not going to happen because of this government's downloading on to municipalities.

So when you talk about a commitment, you don't show you're prepared to back it up.

Mr Hardeman: I too would like to rise and commend the member for Simcoe Centre for his presentation and discussion of Bill 56, the Greater Toronto Services Board legislation, particularly as he spoke in such an informed way about the issue of GO Transit and how GO Transit provides transportation to some 90,000 individuals each and every day and how that helps the economy of the GTA, and that in the area the member is from, Simcoe county, those people too utilize the services on a regular basis.

He spoke to the issue of how this can be better coordinated and operated through municipal involvement. Obviously, we all know that the previous board for GO Transit was in fact structured from municipal government; it was not structured to totally control it but it was on behalf of the province. Now it will be part of the Greater Toronto Services Board and it will, with representatives from each of the municipalities, from each of the regions, be able to operate GO Transit in a way that will best serve the people of their communities. I look forward to that providing a very good service to not only the people living

in the GTA but the area of Simcoe Centre that was referred to.

The legislation does allow the expansion of the service at any point in time, with mutual agreement of the new GO board and the area in which the service will be provided. To make it a practical and cost-effective and efficient service, everyone would have to agree for that happen.

Again, I want to commend the member for making a very solid presentation on the bill.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What was disappointing about the speech was that it was a pretty routine speech of “blame everybody else.” The new game — not particularly new, but I think newer in the latter part of the mandate — is just to blame somebody else, blame the previous Liberal government a long time ago, blame the previous NDP government that was just there, blame the federal government, blame the municipalities.

There may be some virtues to this bill; in fact, I think there are some virtues to this bill. I would have thought the member would spend his time trying to extol the virtues of this bill instead of simply playing the politics of blame: blame somebody else all the time.

I think the public's getting tired of that. They expect in the House that we're going to have an exchange with one another. They expect that. But they keep looking at this government and their hands are thrust in every different direction pointing at somebody else, when in fact very often if they want to find the blame, they should simply look in the mirror and they would find the blame in the mirror, when that individual happened to be making the speech.

I certainly understand the consternation that many have expressed about transportation in this province and what's going to happen to public transportation. This government has gotten out of the business of public transportation, essentially. It has withdrawn dramatically from public transportation. If you want to look at one area where a provincial government, regardless of what party it happens to be, has a significant role to play, it's in transportation, and they seem to have just thrown that back at the municipalities and said, “Do the best you can with the information that you have and with the money that you have.”

They certainly subsidize the highways for all those trucks that are going out there, but I think a lot of people in all parties would like to see more use of rail — GO Transit is one good example of that — and of shipping and things of that nature. But all we got in the last speech was pointing the finger at everybody else for blame.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Speaker: Do the rules not allow the person who made the original speech, in this case the member for Simcoe Centre, an opportunity to have two minutes to respond to our two-minute responses?

The Acting Speaker: You're totally right, but the member is not here, so we'll proceed with the debate.

Further debate?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): It's unfortunate that we're not going to hear from that previous speaker, but in any case, I am very happy to speak on this bill, which I think is of great significance to the people of the greater Toronto area as it will impact on a variety of important issues facing the greater Toronto area, very important indeed.

Let me say from the outset that I believe the provincial Conservative government has not gone far enough. It certainly should have taken the view and adopted the vision that was put forward by Mr Crombie and that came out of the Anne Golden report, which I think would have been the right approach, to have a Greater Toronto Services Board council that dealt with a variety of matters that would be overarching in the entire greater Toronto area.

The bill, as stated, deals with a variety of things. It has an indirect council of 40, including all the regional chairs and also designated area councillors. It has a vague responsibility, and here is a quote, "to promote and facilitate coordinated decision-making among the municipalities in the greater Toronto area," but it has no legal authority to enforce these decisions.

It has poorly defined responsibility for coordinating a seamless GTA transit-wide system, which I think is a real shortcoming of this bill, and it has no authority over social service pooling costs, another major drawback. Those two areas should have been crucial for this GTA services board to administer and to have legal authority over, those two critical services which would bind the GTA because it is an economic entity unto itself.

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I believe that having a GTA-wide transit system is critical to the future success of this economic area and I think without it we're going to be put further and further behind in terms of our ability to compete, as what I would think is emerging in North America is the advent of city-states having to compete with one another for the purposes of attracting investment, jobs and ensuring the economic viability of those areas. Certainly the greater Toronto area is competing with the likes of not only New York, which is probably on a world scale much bigger than what we're talking about here, but Chicago and places like San Francisco and Los Angeles, to mention a few.

Mr Christopherson: Hamilton.

Mr Cordiano: Hamilton is a part of that greater Toronto area and will be a part of that in the future in terms of the economic planning that's important. I say to the member for Hamilton Centre that we need a coordinated approach to some of those economic plans. There are people who work in Toronto and live in Hamilton and vice versa. There is a question around transportation needs, and when you begin to understand that, we need a seamless web, we need that greater overarching kind of transportation system, which we fail to see on the part of this government coming forward with any kind of vision for that to take hold. By and large, we're seeing a tremendous gridlock beginning to take hold on the QEW, the 403 and the 401. Let me tell you, it

won't be too long before the 407 experiences a capacity level.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): You never spent any money on roads. How dare you say that? This is ludicrous.

Mr Cordiano: My friend says we never spent any money on roads. Let me tell you something: Roads alone are not the answer. We'll be choking with all the smog we're creating now on the roads. We had smog alerts over the past summer because we're not looking after the environment, we're not encouraging the use of public transit. In fact, your government's not funding public transit any longer. You've downloaded that responsibility on to municipalities. There's no coordinated initiative.

I haven't heard the Minister of Transportation say much of anything this session, but by and large he has not made any kind of utterance with respect to public transportation and how important that is to the viability of the economy in this province and the environment and how all of this must come together in terms of a coordinated initiative with this Greater Toronto Services Board. We're not hearing that from this government. We're not seeing any action on the part of this government with respect to that kind of initiative. It is absolutely critical for the GTA.

I want to be absolutely critical about this government. You have done precious little with respect to this issue. You can laugh over there, but you are going to face this issue in the next election. Many people not only in the city of Toronto but across the 905 area, which you may deem to be your personal fiefdom over there, many thoughtful people are beginning to see the effects of gridlock. It is a quality-of-life issue that affects many people. People are tired of having to commute from their place of work back to their home, and, by the way, it's not just from the 905 area into the 416 area; it is interregional. They're beginning to question the viability of having a lifestyle that imposes a one-hour to two-hour commute each and every day. It is difficult on the life of families, it is difficult with respect to a variety of things. It's not good for people's health etc. It is one of those issues that I think will come to the surface.

That dovetails with the whole issue of urban sprawl. There's no planning now that's taking place. This government does not see as a priority real planning concerns. Land use policies are non-existent with this government. With respect to a sound strategy around the environment, there is no discussion of that with this government. It's not part of the plan; it's not part of the vision. This is a government that entirely ignores the question of the environment, entirely ignores what that's doing to the quality of our air and what's happening with respect to the health concerns around that.

Tying it back into the Greater Toronto Services Board, it doesn't have enough teeth. We support this legislation because it moves ever so slowly in the right direction, but certainly not quickly enough and not to great effect. This GTSB should have been responsible for GTA-wide economic development strategy and planning, and a coordinated initiative, and it should have the authority to

do that. It should have been responsible for overseeing the pooling of social costs, which it has no authority to do as well. It won't be able to administer regional roads, garbage, sewer and other types of services like that.

I believe this bill does not go far enough, and I think those are very important questions. They're very costly decisions that will have to be made by those regions. They're very costly with respect to what will take place in terms of development.

Going back to the question of urban sprawl, we're not making efficient decisions around those development questions, because the infrastructure that needs to be built isn't going forward as quickly as the development that's desired to take place, the population expansion.

We need to understand what impact this will have, and there is no discussion around these questions — not from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, not from the Minister of Transportation, not from the Minister of the Environment. They are silent on these questions, and I believe this Greater Toronto Services Board will be handcuffed and not able to deal with these very important questions.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have great faith in our table officers, but I suggest that another 10 minutes be put on the clock since the member only had 10 minutes to speak. I would like you to confer with the table officers to see if that's possible.

The Acting Speaker: To the member for Kingston and The Islands, at 5 o'clock we had reached the seven hours allotted for these debates. Now we have to revert back to the normal procedure, which is 10 minutes and that's it.

Mr Gerretsen: On a further point then, Mr Speaker, since you're talking about the draconian rule changes that this government brought in: Since we have a prominent member here who represents the Toronto area, which is going to be heavily involved with the Greater Toronto Services Board, I would request unanimous consent that the member be allowed to speak for another 10 minutes to address his concerns with respect to this board.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? There is a no.

Mr Michael Brown: Who said no?

Mr Gerretsen: Who said no?

The Acting Speaker: I heard a no, period.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Acting Speaker: Please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

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Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? The member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. You and the table are looking at each other quizzically. I think I'm up for the two-minute response, right?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, you are. You have your two-minute response.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. To respond to the member for Lawrence, when he was talking about the fact that the GTA has to compete with other major international centres such as New York and Chicago, of course somewhat tongue in cheek, I said "Hamilton" from my seat. But as I noted on this bill earlier, the fact that there isn't a stronger coordinating and planning role for this new body does impact my community of Hamilton-Wentworth.

For the government to stand up and say there is a mechanism for this new board to go ahead and take on new strategic issues, first of all, it's non-binding and, second, it requires two-thirds support of the board. Everybody who analyzes the politics of who's going to be on there readily acknowledges that there's fast going to be gridlock on most of the key issues that we in Hamilton and others would like to see in terms of that stronger coordinating role.

I would remind the government that both the Golden report and David Crombie's Who Does What panel recommended a much stronger entity than the one that's being offered here.

So when I talk about Hamilton-Wentworth and the impact of a weak GTA planning board, if I can call it that, the fact is that if we don't know what you're planning in this area, we have a great deal of difficulty responding and putting in plans for our own region in terms of urban sprawl, land use, environmental control and transportation — all issues that affect our local economy — and we're going to be hurt by this weak entity.

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to the remarks by my colleague the member for Lawrence, as we always do when he speaks. He spoke at great length about the gridlock, particularly in the greater Toronto area, and indeed as an interregional problem. The GTSB will provide a forum for GTA municipalities to develop strategies for things like transportation planning. It can look not only at GO Transit, but it can also look at roads and at seamless public transit. The goal is to use transportation infrastructure better in the GTA.

He did mention, as far as the government's transportation policies are concerned, the plan to move ahead and expand Highway 407. We sat together on a committee not two weeks ago with the bill to privatize Highway 407, albeit a project started by the New Democratic Party government, to expand it and to try and push forward the construction not just to the Halton region, on which we heard a very meaningful policy put forward by the regional chair of Halton, Joyce Savoline, about the folks in Halton being the missing link and the importance of pushing that ahead, but as well in the Durham region. The government of course will be pushing ahead with that piece of legislation to be able to deliver better transit and transportation for those folks. That will help alleviate the congestion on Highway 401 and indeed all the highways in the greater Toronto area.

He didn't mention Highway 416, and it's no wonder he didn't mention Highway 416, because Highway 416 is important transportation infrastructure of the province of Ontario. I give the important aspect. At least the New Democratic Party had the guts to start this project. The Liberal government promised the money for Highway 416 but it took an NDP government to get the first shovel in the ground and it took a Conservative government to finish off the job; even to get the great street of Brophy Drive redesignated on Highway 416.

Mr Gerretsen: Let me just say that on the last point the member is totally and completely wrong. The 416 was actually started by a Liberal government, under David Peterson. As a matter of fact, four successive Tory governments prior to that talked about building the 416 but did absolutely nothing about it.

I found it very interesting when the honourable government whip got up and accused a former government of not doing anything about the transportation problems in this province. Well, let me just say this: What this government has done with respect to the highway system in Ontario is absolutely disastrous. It is just horrible. You have basically —

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): The 401 has never been in better shape and you know it.

The Acting Speaker: Minister.

Mr Gerretsen: The 401 is in good shape now, by and large, I will agree with that, but how about all the other highways in Ontario that you have downloaded on to local municipalities? You've basically washed your hands of them and said, "From now on, they're your responsibility." I know you'll say, "They're in good shape." Well, some of them are, some of them aren't.

You know something? Even the local municipalities may be able to maintain them for a year or two, but what is going to happen four, five, 10 years from now when some of these roads that you have downloaded are going to need some major repairs, some major rebuilding? The local municipalities simply will not have the financial wherewithal to get involved in those massive reconstruction programs.

What you've done is criminal. You never should have taken the highway system in Ontario and downloaded it to local municipalities.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: The Minister of Agriculture thinks this is quite funny. It is not funny and I think you will live to regret the day you did that.

Mr Wildman: I listened with interest to my friend from Lawrence. I want to say that we agree completely with his view that this board is not nearly as strong as it needs to be if it's going to have any real impact on growth in the GTA, whether it's in relation to the planning of GO Transit or other public transit in the GTA, and as it relates to other parts of the province. It's certainly not going to have any real impact with regard to urban sprawl and land use planning.

This board, as far as I can see, is going to be nothing more than a talk shop. There will be a lot of discussion, a lot of philosophizing, a lot of positions taken, but nothing really done except for the particular matters with regard specifically to GO, and in that situation it looks to me like the area around Toronto in the 905 belt will receive more out of this than Toronto. We all know that 85% of the riders are from 905, and that's a good thing because that means at least there are fewer cars coming downtown every day as people come to work, but at the same time, Toronto will pay a good portion of this.

The whole thing relates to the fact that this government does not really believe in systematic planning. Whether it's land-use planning, transit or traffic planning, it doesn't believe in it. It believes that the market should decide, and if the market decides on concentrating everything in Toronto, we're going to have continued congestion and all the problems that go with that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lawrence, you have two minutes.

Mr Cordiano: I want to thank all the members for their comments. I think it's important to recognize that this bill creates the Greater Toronto Services Board, which is a first important step. However, I hope this government does not allow this Greater Toronto Services Board to be used as an excuse for not involving itself in further planning issues and in further issues that are GTA-wide.

The role of the provincial government is essential because you have not given this Greater Toronto Services Board enough teeth to deal with the bigger questions around transit, around water and sewage and with respect to the pooling of social costs and issues like that. These are important issues and I don't think they're going to be resolved in any way, shape or form by this Greater Toronto Services Board as it is envisaged in this bill, Bill 56.

To respond to the member for Hamilton Centre, what happens to Toronto and to Hamilton is important, because if we did have a transit system — think of this — that linked up the two airports, the one in Hamilton and the one in Toronto, that would help the airport in Hamilton. It would help the flow of goods and people through those two airports. I think there needs to be a vision around those two airports that links the two regions up. Therein lies a legitimate role for the province to play in order to link those two, in order for the GTSB to be stronger, to have those kinds of planning powers.

It doesn't have that in this bill and that's a real flaw. I think it will limit growth in the GTA, and I look forward to further debate down the road in the years to come around strengthening that role for the GTSB.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Wildman: I'd just like to go on from the two short comments I made in response to the remarks of the member for Lawrence with regard to this Greater Toronto Services Board Act.

As I said a moment ago, in the New Democratic Party we believe that if we're going to have an overall structure,

a committee or a board that is going to be responsible for discussion and development of services in the greater Toronto region, then it's got to have more teeth. It has to have more strength than this proposed board because, as I said, this is just going to be a talk shop. It will not have the strength and the powers to deal with infrastructure, whether it's water and sewer, roads or transit. It won't be able to deal with urban sprawl and proper land use planning and it won't be able to do anything of significance with regard to economic development for the greater Toronto area.

This is of particular importance not just to Toronto and the surrounding communities but to the whole of the province, because those of us like myself who come from the hinterland have to recognize that the centre of economic development, the economic engine of the province is in Toronto. We would like to see less concentration, less congestion in Toronto. We would like to see a regional economic development plan from this government, but the Tories have never thought of that, going back to when the Duke of Kent used to be in the position of Minister of Finance. At that time it was called the Treasurer of Ontario. He did make some tentative moves towards regional economic development which were only tentative, I think. Subsequently, we had the Liberal government and then the NDP who did in fact move offices out of Toronto to other parts of the province.

Mr Cordiano: We did too.

Mr Wildman: That's what I said, the Liberal government and the NDP.

What happened to that when this government came to power? They cancelled all the programs that suggested the moves into the other areas, places like Sault Ste Marie, St Catharines and other places like that, and said, "We're going to concentrate everything in Toronto." Then they amalgamated the municipalities in Toronto against the wishes of over 70% of the population of this region. At the same time, ironically, they didn't do anything with regard to changes in the regions around Toronto. One was suggested that might have to do with political representation in those areas. At any rate, they didn't do anything there.

Then, as an answer to the question, "How is this new megacity going to be able to deal with issues around economic development, urban sprawl, land use planning and the development of infrastructure as it relates to the areas and communities around Toronto?" the suggestion was, "We'll set up a board that will have representation from all of these areas, all of these communities, which will be able to deal with the issues of coordination." Then the government doesn't give this board any real power. I suppose that same wag would suggest that this is just a facade. It's just to make it look as if the government is interested in coordination. It's to give the municipal politicians one more place where they can sit around and talk to one another and take positions, but it actually won't be able to do anything. It won't make any change.

The government, the Minister of Municipal Affairs without Housing, has suggested that at some future date

this board could take upon itself these powers and actually have some power to do something. The problem with that, of course, is that the bill requires that there be a two-thirds vote in order for the board to do that. We all know that is very unlikely to ever happen. It might happen at some future date when it's already too late, when the problems of urban sprawl and the lack of coordination for economic development, the development of transit and transportation planning has become so serious that everyone admits there has to be some coordination, but then it will be too late. You'll be trying to fix something that has already gone wrong, because frankly it's already beginning to go wrong.

Just try to get out of this city during rush hour. Anybody who has to travel those highways knows the problems we've got.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Thousands of people do it every day.

Mr Wildman: Oh, they do it, all right, but how long does it take them? Much longer than it should take them when you consider the actual distances, becomes sometimes places like the Don Valley Parkway should be called a parking lot, not a parkway.

This government has decided that one way it can deal with the income tax cut is by downloading all sorts of services to the municipalities. This is another way of saying, "OK, if we're going to give you all these responsibilities and costs —"

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, Minister, member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Wildman: " — we're actually going to give you some say in how the programs and services are going to be provided."

What is this going to do? There's a lot in this bill to do with GO Transit, but there's nothing in here that is going to make it possible to ensure that the board actually is going to be able to ensure there is proper transit planning. We know the difficulties and the problems we face in this city on hot summer days with smog, the number of times there are respiratory concerns and orders where the authorities say to the public, "If you're an older person, if you're a child or if you're a person with respiratory problems, don't go outside." That's the situation we're facing now. It will only get worse if more and more vehicles are clogging our roads and idling as they sit in those parking lots that pretend to be roads during so-called rush hour. I shouldn't call it rush hour; it should be called gridlock hour.

We in our caucus believe that what is required is a strong GTS Board. In fact, during the megacity debate we suggested the abolition of Metro and the regions in the 905 area, keeping the lower-tier municipalities and creating a GTS Board that would serve as a regional level of government, a board that actually would have some say, some control, some teeth and responsibility as well as accountability.

We believe we need a board that will promote the GTA to the outside world and will be involved in economic

development, not just another talk shop; that will coordinate the efforts of all of the communities in this region so we're not working at cross purposes, where Pickering is doing one thing and Toronto is doing another and other communities are attempting to compete with one another for economic development rather than coordinating what's going on. We want a body that will make decisions about infrastructure, that crosses municipal boundaries, that will deal with urban sprawl. As the municipalities compete now for economic development, all that does is exacerbate the problems of urban sprawl, and it costs the taxpayers of the GTA a great deal of money, about \$1 billion a year, according to a study by Pamela Blais which was done for the Golden report.

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The Golden report supported a strong regional body on the GTA and, interestingly enough, so did David Crombie in his *Who Does What* report. This current Greater Toronto Services Board is a weak proposal compared to the suggestions that have been made by David Crombie and Pamela Blais and the Golden report. It doesn't really do anything. We're going to see the problems exacerbated. We're going to see the situation get worse until it gets so bad that indeed two thirds of the members of the Greater Toronto Services Board might come to vote to have more power and more responsibility. But then, mark my words, it will be too late because the problems will have become obvious because they are so difficult and so serious, and then we won't be able to resolve the problems.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Hardeman: I want to thank the member for Algoma for his presentation. I just want to express some disappointment in his analogy of the municipal politicians or the people who run municipal government and their ability to work together and to provide a quality service for the people they represent. I have more faith than his suggestion in his presentation that because legislation does not force and does not obligate municipal politicians to do certain things, they will not make the decisions in the best interests of their communities.

I think it's fair to say and I think we would all agree that coordinating these services on a more regional-type basis than the present region can do is good for their community and for their neighbouring community. I have every reason to believe that they will make those decisions.

I am not the only one who believes that. I just happened to have here an editorial from the *Toronto Star*, I believe it is. It says: "But one should not underestimate the influence of this new body. Collectively, the politicians sitting on it would represent 4.7 million people." That's bigger than all other provinces save and except Ontario and Quebec. "Moreover, the government has left the door open for the board to evolve into a more powerful body. We hope this will happen. For now, however, this is a welcome step forward."

In this case I would agree with the *Toronto Star* and suggest that I think this is a step forward, first of all to

administer GO Transit, which is already across the whole GTA region, and secondly to improve on and look at regional services in a better and more coordinated way to make sure that the service does not stop at the regional boundaries but in fact can be extended to serve the people in the whole GTA area. I believe this bill will do that.

Mr Gerretsen: They've done it again. Another closure motion has just been filed with the Clerk of this House to the effect that this bill here is being time-allocated. Time allocation is a nice word for saying closure. The democratic will of the people will no longer be able to be heard in this House. As a matter of fact, next Monday this bill is going for clause-by-clause consideration between 9 in the morning and 12.

There won't even be any time for the general public to express its views on the merits of this bill. There may very well be some people who have something very good to say about this bill. Once again, you're cutting off debate, as you've done in so many other bills. I think this about the 30th bill that this government has invoked closure on. It doesn't want to hear from the people through its committee system and it doesn't want to hear from its elected representatives.

Remember, there is another news release that I just picked up, with respect to Bill 79, which was time-allocated last week, you may recall, dealing with the tax situations you've bungled up in this province. What does this say? This is issued by the regional municipality of Halton. Let me just read to you what the regional chairman says in this media release.

"The final straw is that the province is also breaking its commitment to fund their share of Halton's tax rebate program, which amounts to \$1 million." I want the government members to listen to this: "I am concerned about how we do business with a government that won't honour their written commitments. Halton would expect to be able to take Minister Eves at his word."

So here we go again: For the 30th time, at least, since this government has been elected, they're invoking closure in a situation where we don't need closure at all.

Mr Christopherson: I rise to commend the speech of my colleague from Algoma. I hope that government members will take into account the fact that we're speaking of one of the most senior members of this House. He has served here 23 years, five of those as a cabinet minister, someone who has watched and been part of the discussion of all the evolution of modern-day Ontario. So when he underscores the Golden report and David Crombie's *Who Does What* panel report, emphasizing that this really should be stronger, that the GTSB as proposed should be stronger, I would think the government would be further ahead by listening to those kinds of voices and by listening to this kind of experience speaking.

I listened to other comments as they relate to what the member for Algoma has said, and we now hear this argument — I've heard it a number of times — that the government wants to walk before they run. They make the whole argument around the fact that it's prudent to be able

to walk before you run and to be cautious. What I find so hypocritical about that argument is that it's the exact opposite of what this government has done in so many areas. Take education. They admitted they were going to create a phony crisis, did just that, took virtually all the powers away from school boards, vested every major decision in education into one minister, made him the czar of education and didn't listen to anyone who said, "Why don't you walk before you run at the very least?"

That's the point: They suggest that they've got this thought-through philosophy. The reality is they grab whatever quick little argument, try to solve the cracks that appear, and God knows there are going to be more than enough cracks in this board eventually.

Mr Baird: I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Algoma for his remarks. He always speaks eloquently and you always learn something from listening to him.

But in listening to my colleague the member for Hamilton Centre just now, I feel obliged to respond that you just can't get it right either way. You either move too slowly and don't get on with it or you move too quickly. That's the reality of being in government: You'll never make the opposition parties happy. At some point, though, you've got to make decisions, and I think Bill 56 reflects a compromise and a balance of the varied interests. Virtually everyone agrees that we need to move forward and get better coordination across the greater Toronto area. We need to get on with it. As the member for Hamilton Centre said, we've got to learn to walk before we can run.

Mr Christopherson: What about education?

Mr Baird: I don't think there's a need to make all the decisions at this time. The GTSB is being set up —

Mr Christopherson: What about property tax reform?

Mr Baird: On property tax reform, we've taken a slow approach and we're dealing with one issue at a time.

Mr Christopherson: You try to run and you still can't crawl.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre, please.

Mr Baird: We dealt with education first. We dealt with the Ontario Property Assessment Corp later. We dealt with assessment review in another bill. We didn't put it all in an omnibus bill. We broke it up into bite-size pieces so that we could have more debate in the Legislative Assembly, which is extremely important.

But I digress. I should get back to the comments of the member for Algoma.

The board's responsibilities will undoubtedly evolve over time. The board may choose at a later date, with the consent of the folks from the various municipalities, to even take on an expanded role. The provincial government, whether it's two or three or 10 years from now, may choose to present an option for it to go further, but that doesn't mean we can't get on with these types of things today. That's something that's important.

The legislation we're debating today requires review in the year 2000 to see how it has evolved. Maybe it should

be expanded, maybe it shouldn't be quite as broad, but the opportunity is there and that's exceptionally important.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: I want to thank my friends from Oxford, Kingston and The Islands, Hamilton Centre and Nepean for their comments. I would just say to the member for Oxford that in his disappointment he probably didn't hear what I was really saying. I was not being critical of municipal politicians. I recognize that they are elected to represent their communities, to represent their ratepayers and to do what they can for their local government.

But the provincial government has a responsibility beyond municipal boundaries. The provincial government has a responsibility to give direction for development outside a particular municipality. That's why GO Transit was developed by the provincial government. It could not be done by the municipalities in co-operation with one another no matter how much goodwill there was among the municipal politicians.

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The member for Hamilton Centre points out a couple of things. First, he's quite right that I can look back to Darcy McKeough, the Duke of Kent, and his attempts at economic development across the province, and see how tentative the steps were at that time. But I don't understand why this government has not accepted the Golden report, and particularly the Crombie report, because Crombie's commission was set up by this government to make recommendations. He made recommendations and the government hasn't followed through.

The argument that the government must walk before it runs, that this board must walk before it runs, is so silly when you consider the other things this government has done. The member for Nepean says they're going to be criticized whether they go too fast or too slow. Why not approach it with moderate speed, listening to what people have to say, and do it in a responsible way, rather than having one snafu after another like you've had with assessment. The fact is that this government doesn't like debate. That's why they brought in closure, and that's why we're not going to have a real discussion of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I'm pleased to rise today and speak on behalf of Bill 56. As the member for Durham-York, I'm in a rather unique position in that I represent two municipalities in Durham and three in York. It has certainly come to my attention over the years that we had to work towards what we have today: a piece of legislation that is in fact enabling legislation.

It's almost 10 years ago that we first heard of the creation of the GTA by the office of the GTA in the Liberal government. It came as a shock for many of my neighbours sitting on their farms to think of themselves as being part of the greater Toronto area. However, as that office came into being and with the change in government, and the NDP then commissioning the Golden commission, it allowed for discussion and recognition to become part of that public consciousness. When the Golden commission

was published, we had an opportunity; I as an MPP was given the opportunity to have consultations in different parts of the riding. I certainly remember those public meetings in Beaverton and Uxbridge, where people came forward to discuss their concerns over what they felt was a major step in seeing themselves as part of the GTA.

When we look at that whole process of consultation from Anne Golden, Libby Burnham, David Crombie and Milt Farrow, we had the opportunity then within our communities to become part of that consultation process. Each allowed for its own style of public input. I would say to you that those opportunities were vital, because they demonstrated the necessary building of awareness on the part of the public and on the part of municipalities to see themselves in that broader framework.

When we look at this piece of legislation it becomes clear, and it became clear to my constituents: They came to understand that there were some key issues, that there was a need to have a seamless and efficient delivery of service. That is something people have come to understand in the last couple of years. They've also come to recognize the need for shared planning and coordination and co-operation among their communities. They also understand the need for representation, including upper- and lower-tier municipalities. Finally, they recognize that they don't need another level of government. It is in the recognition of those imperatives that we can see that this piece of legislation matches those needs.

It's very clear that there is a recognition of the need for co-operation. There's also a need for a forum to deal with infrastructure, transportation, transit and growth management. The people I represent recognize the fact that infrastructure is critical. The investment in infrastructure is the most important issue that government can undertake in order to look at the opportunities for growth, for jobs and for investment. It's issues like water and sewers and that coordination that are absolutely paramount in communities such as mine. It's also paramount to look at the creation of the GO Transit, now the GT Transit, and certainly people in my area are very pleased to know that starting in January there is an increased service coming from Beaverton down to the Toronto area.

It's also clear to my constituents that the experience of the early 1990s demonstrated the hole in the doughnut, the intricate relationship between Toronto and the GTA. This was dramatically demonstrated in that period, and it has become clear to my constituents that regardless of where they are in the GTA, people recognize that there is a need for coordination, for economic development and for growth management. That's where I look at this piece of legislation as the answer to many of those needs. By making up the composition as it is outlined in this legislation, it clearly answers some of the concerns that many people have indicated to me over the past three and a half years. Everyone felt it was important that every municipality had a voice, and that is very clear in the way this legislation has been proposed.

It's also clear to me and to my constituents that it is only appropriate that Toronto have 50% of this

membership. It's also clear to us that it's important that there be that flexibility that responds to those population shifts. By being tied to the changes in the census-taking, I believe that we have struck that important balance for everyone in the area.

When you look at its mandate, it appears to me that it meets those community needs that I have heard over and over again in public forums, in letters and in discussions with individuals. Everyone recognizes the need to have a forum that addresses those issues that are common to all. Everyone recognizes the need for coordination of economic development. Over and over again in my area we look at the fact that we're the northerly municipalities of two regions, and the importance then of having a voice at the GTSB is vital. It's also vital to provide coordination, because these municipalities and these constituents recognize that economic development and coordination of that economic development are what will make the entire GTA strong. They recognize the importance of infrastructure and of a transit pattern.

It's critical to move to formalize this forum, to move forward from the studies to meeting those concerns of almost four million people. I think the most critical aspect of this piece of legislation is its flexibility. This is not a new level of government. It is mandated to have a review that takes place before the end of the year 2000. For my constituents this is absolutely critical. There is such a divergence in terms of agricultural commitment and the kinds of activity that go on within the communities that I represent. They recognize that there are very strong, compelling reasons that make this legislation necessary, but they also recognize the need to have their different communities of interest represented at that table.

Finally, it allows us to have a process to review the boundaries, the membership and the powers of the GTSB. I want to end on the issue of this flexibility and draw particular attention to the issue of the review of boundaries, because many of my constituents have recognized a rural-urban problem, or at least a tension, and they want to be assured that in the future those discussions will have an opportunity for fulsome debate. They want to be assured that those options are there for them. It is through this kind of enabling legislation that we can be sure that those voices will continue to be heard.

The strength, then, is this flexibility of allowing for change. That is what is the strength of the GTSB. I think it's important to recognize that the work that has been done in the last few months by Alan Tonks has allowed this kind of flexibility to appear in the legislation we are looking at today. It has allowed the general public to understand the complexities of coordination and it is that public understanding that has to be met as we move forward with this legislation.

1800

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker, I'd like unanimous consent, since this is a government member speaking on a bill that her own government has proposed, that we be allowed a time period for questions and answers.

The Acting Speaker: Unfortunately, as you look at the clock, it's already 1800 hours. Normally at this time I would say the following: Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Riverdale has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Deputy Premier. It's related to services for abused women.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I want to take this opportunity to respond to the answer. I don't have the instant Hansard in front of me from this afternoon but I recall that the Deputy Premier, Mr Eves, said in answer to my question and to my leader Mr Hampton's question about funding to shelters and other programs for victims of spousal abuse that the Ontario Women's Directorate was actually spending more money than ever before. It's certainly an opportunity for me now to correct his record and I'm going to do that.

There is absolutely no dispute, and I doubt very much if whoever is going to be responding to me is going to dispute this, that a 5% cut was made across the board to shelters across the province back in 1995, and that still stands. In fact, there have been \$11 million cut from shelter funding in 1996 and 1997. The government likes to say, for instance, "We took over the municipal funding for shelters," but all they're doing for that is paying the per diem rate and not the full amount that was there before. In this case, ironically, as a result of the government uploading it, shelters are not getting as much money as they were getting before. Altogether, we're talking here about \$11 million cut from shelters, which, as yesterday's report from OAITH which we were referring to states, the shelters cannot deal with because the demand has gone up.

I also want to put on the record, based on public accounts, that the overall expenditure for the office responsible for women's issues has declined from \$21.8 million in 1994-95 to \$14.5 million in 1996-97. In 1996-97 there was \$17.3 million allocated but only \$14.5 million spent. This year's budget allocation, 1997-98, was \$19.4 million.

What we have here is the old shell game this government plays over and over again to try to fool the people. They take a whole bunch of money out and then put a small portion of that money back in and get up and brag, "We just increased the budget," in this case for something as fundamental in a decent society as services for abused women and their children in this province.

Having put that on the record, let me also talk about the other issues raised by me and the leader of the NDP, Howard Hampton, this afternoon. We raised the issue

around the other services that have been cut across the board by other ministers. The single most negative effect of all the cuts, according to the United Way report, which also just came out last week, was the cut in welfare rates. This is having the biggest negative impact on women who are trying to flee from violence and there's nothing, no special allowance, nothing, to help these women, nothing to replace it.

Because this government got completely out of providing affordable housing, the reality now is that there are tens of thousands of people on a waiting list to get into subsidized housing. My colleague from Fort York pointed out yesterday, again from another United Way report, Anne Golden, that there are 31,000 children in Toronto alone now on waiting lists for subsidized housing, no doubt. We have evidence that some of those women and children are fleeing from abusers. This is unacceptable.

There have been more cuts to legal aid, so it's harder for women to get access to family court. Yes, the government has invested in and done some things in the criminal justice system, but not all women go through that system. They need the supports there in the community. Training programs have been cut, and on and on.

In regard to all the safety nets and the supports which I say were not adequate before 1995 — our government improved on them, but they needed to be improved more — this government has made the situation worse. That's what we were trying to point out today and I implore the government now to listen to what we're saying and reinstate the money that has been cut from shelters and from the other programs that help women.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): This is a very serious issue, and I believe the member for Riverdale warrants a response to her concerns, certainly in terms of the government initiatives on violence prevention.

I think it's important to note that Ontario does indeed devote \$100 million annually to support programs that address the prevention of violence against women and their children. This is an increase over the annual funding allocated in 1994-95. In 1997, \$27 million in new funding over four years was announced through the agenda for action strategic framework. In fact, our government is the first government to have a comprehensive approach to provide coordinated, effective services and programs to assaulted and abused women and their children.

Programs that are supported through our violence against women prevention initiative in 1997-98 are in the areas of crisis intervention and support, where we spent \$79.8 million, which includes providing supports for abused women and their children through 98 shelters and related counselling services; providing supports to victims of sexual assault through 33 sexual assault centres and 27 sexual assault treatment centres and related counselling services; and providing nine cultural interpreters programs; in justice, where we spent \$1.3 million, which includes 30 male batterers programs, emergency legal aid, domestic assault prosecutors programs, mandatory charging policies; in prevention, where we spent \$2.4 million, which includes training of professionals and service pro-

viders who support abused women and children, 126 school-based services programs, developing resources for teachers on violence prevention and supporting community-based violence prevention projects through grants.

With our agenda for action, we've announced many new initiatives: in crisis intervention and support, we spent \$1.3 million —

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): You're announcing it, but you're not spending any money.

Ms Mushinski: To the member from Kingston, this includes implementing a services plan to enhance services for abused francophone women; piloting and evaluating the sexual assault treatment model for victims of domestic abuse in six sexual assault treatment centres; enhancing cultural interpreters' program for abused women; undertaking board development training for 33 rape crisis centres; piloting services for abused older women; and enhancing support for women with disabilities in domestic violence courts.

1810

In justice, we committed a further \$2.6 million. That includes evaluating and operating six domestic violence courts; providing male batterers programs at six domestic violence courts; providing additional emergency legal aid funding to serve abused women; piloting specialized legal services for abused women; providing cultural interpretive services in eight domestic violence courts and six sexual assault treatment centre pilots; and undertaking a safety first audit to improve the systemic response to violence.

In prevention, we spent another \$1.7 million, if the member for Kingston and The Islands is interested. This includes training children's aid and victims' assistance workers to respond to child abuse cases involving violence against women; developing a training package for elementary teachers on violence issues; and in evaluation and research, we spent \$200,000 more, which includes developing and piloting a performance management system for agencies serving abused women.

HEALTH CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Timiskaming has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning the shortage of doctors in Kirkland Lake. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the parliamentary assistant may reply for five minutes.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I must say I'm very disappointed that the Minister of Health is not here, because I wanted to use this opportunity to reinform her about the very critical situation we have in the riding of Timiskaming, especially in the town of Kirkland Lake, with the severe doctor shortage we have. I have never in my 13½ years here ever used this opportunity before, and I thought it would be an opportunity to engage the minister directly in this debate.

The problem is, and I'll direct this now to the parliamentary assistant, that any of the incentive programs

this government has announced in the last few years to help the underserved areas of this province have not dealt with any of the mid-sized towns in my riding, such as Kirkland Lake and New Liskeard. All your efforts have been geared towards towns that are serviced by between two and seven doctors. Quite frankly, now they're doing fine.

But with this sort of mishmash of incentive programs, you've really distorted the playing field out there. Examples in my riding of Timiskaming would be a doctor from Kirkland Lake who went 40 miles down the road to Englehart to practice because of the incentives, and in the Tri-town area based around the New Liskeard-Timiskaming hospital, we lost a doctor there to another northern Ontario small town because he chose to take the salary and benefit package options.

What I'm saying to the minister is we have to have a level playing field here so that all the northern underserved areas have access to salary and benefit packages. Doctors being attracted to Kirkland Lake can only be given the fee-for-service payment system, and I'm finding, when I talk to doctors who have graduated recently from medical school, that the newer, younger doctors prefer the salary option.

I'm saying to the minister, in order for the north and our towns, who are working very hard in addressing this problem, to attract more doctors to our communities, we have to have a greater arsenal of incentive programs. Towns such as Kirkland Lake, whose complement is 17 doctors for their catchment area, are at a disadvantage compared to smaller towns that can't supply one or two homes for a doctor; they'd have to supply 17 homes if they had to throw that into a sort of local incentive package, and that's not right either. I don't want to see local communities getting into a local bidding war across the north when our communities don't have the resources to do that. It's the responsibility of, number one, the OMA and the Ministry of Health to ensure that all Ontarians are receiving proper medical care.

When I hear stories out of Kirkland Lake that we've got terminally ill cancer patients sitting in the Kirkland and District Hospital waiting room to try to see a doctor to either get that treatment they need or to get their prescriptions refilled, that is not acceptable in this Ontario. I would hope, if the minister were here, she would admit too that that is just not acceptable.

I've written her letters on that as far back as June 17 of this year, and on September 1 I sent her a letter with some positive ideas about how to try to alleviate the problem, and this came up in her response she gave today in regard to the nurse practitioner program. That is a \$5-million funding program that will allow nurse practitioners to practise, but again it doesn't apply to any of the health facilities we have in most of northern Ontario and specifically Timiskaming, and that's the problems.

I gave her some ideas of how to change the program so that, number one, local hospitals in the north could hire a nurse practitioner who could act as a gatekeeper in the emergency departments and could start to schedule people

to the proper area or service that patient herself or himself; two, allow northern doctors to be able to hire, if they put the funding there, a nurse practitioner so that somebody like me who has a winter cold could be seen by a nurse practitioner and the doctor could see people with more serious problems.

We're not utilizing the nurse practitioners who are graduating out of northern Ontario. Most places in the north cannot hire them because they can only be hired by community health centres, nursing stations and native access centres. We don't have any of those, except for one small francophone centre in New Liskeard. So you've got programs there that you've announced but we can't access them. The same with the small doctor incentive programs: You don't have the incentive out there for mid-size towns like Kirkland Lake and New Liskeard. You've got to do that. We've got a crisis here and I won't stand here and allow you to allow terminally ill people not to be served in the riding of Timiskaming.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to respond to the member for Timiskaming's statement. Thank you for bringing it to the House. In fact, I'm pleased to hear that he had some positive suggestions with respect to the program. The leader of the party, for example, is big on criticism and headlines but bereft of policy. It's very rare that we get policy suggestions from across the floor and I appreciate Timiskaming bringing some forward, which I will relay to the Minister of Health.

We recognize that the issue of recruiting doctors to the north, to rural areas, in fact, is a long-standing problem. The member for Timiskaming, I can understand — coming from Niagara myself, I'm increasingly concerned that doctors are retiring in the Niagara Peninsula and Niagara South in particular. I would like to see some improvements to the underserved area program to enable doctors and other health care professionals as well to more readily choose to come to the underserved areas, Timiskaming for one and Niagara for another. In fact, I'm working — let me add that for a moment — with Dr Jeff Remington from Port Colborne in my riding on Niagara's application for underserved area.

This is a long-standing problem. We have made a number of policy prescriptions to help address the underserved area challenges that we face and particularly for doctor recruitment in the north. Many of these incentives are general to the north and some are to specific areas. I think the member would agree that it makes sense that if the ministry is going to address problems, they should address the areas of the highest need first, some areas totally without doctors in their community or maybe only one or two. I understand that Timiskaming, a larger centre in the north, has a much larger complement, and the incentives we've brought forward are going to encourage doctors to choose any of these areas in the north — Timiskaming, or some of the smaller communities like Ear Falls as well.

The member for Timiskaming talks about the need for the number of doctors. I should say to him too that the

agreement we've made with the north, announced this past week with great support from a number of the municipalities that are that a joint OMA and government team, led by Graham Scott, whom you probably remember, a former deputy minister at the Ministry of Health, will be reviewing the number of physicians required for communities in northern Ontario to ensure that the appropriate complement of physicians is in place to serve the population. So the Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer, is listening and has moved to ensure that the proper complement of doctors is in the community.

As part of that announcement, physicians working in 20 of the underserved northern communities will now be eligible to receive a base salary annually of \$128,000, which is 20% more than the provincial average for fee for service, with other incentives on top. For example, emergency service, on call, stipends for specialty services like anesthesiology and obstetrics will be doubled from current levels. Retention bonuses of \$10,000 will be offered to physicians providing continuous service in the community for three years, as well as \$60,000 annually for overhead costs associated with these practices.

I have to say too that I've enjoyed my work with PAIRO on this issue. I know this is very important for them in northern Ontario as well as other parts of Ontario in trying some new incentives that had not been tried by previous governments. I think they've done some good work bringing suggestions to the minister, who has acted for those communities.

In the North Bay Nugget, Mayor Peter Brushey of Powassan viewed the news as positive. He said, "We do have a vacancy and perhaps this will address that."

In the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal: "I think that this will be good for the north. It will guarantee and stabilize physicians. The income issue is resolved and the doctors' quality of life is" restored.

Dr William Orován, president of the Ontario Medical Association, recognizes that "this is a long-standing problem and we can't address it all at once."

That's true. It's a long-standing problem that governments have attempted to address, whether they were Conservative under Davis and Miller, Liberal under Peterson or NDP under Rae. That long-standing problem was not resolved by those previous governments. But under the leadership of Premier Harris and Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer, we are moving to address these problems, and as I just said, there are a large number of positive comments about what we've done to address the issue of doctor shortages in the north. I think that is substantial progress, especially when juxtaposed to the lack of action from the previous two governments. We're making progress. I look forward to seeing more doctors in the underserved northern areas of the province.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

The House will adjourn until 6:30.

The House adjourned at 1823.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
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Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Soins de longue durée, ministre délégué aux affaires des personnes âgées	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
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Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
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Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
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Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président		
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)		
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)		
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Sault Ste Marie /	
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
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Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
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Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
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Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
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Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wentworth East / -Est	Skarica, Toni (PC)
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Prescott and Russell /		Willowdale	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prince Edward-Lennox-		Wilson Heights	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
South Hastings /		Windsor-Riverside	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox-		Windsor-Sandwich	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Hastings-Sud		Windsor-Walkerville	Parker, John L. (PC)
Quinte	Fox, Gary (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
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Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	York Mills	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)		
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S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Yorkview	
	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York South / -Sud	
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bradley, James J. (L)		
St Catharines	Froese, Tom (PC)		
St Catharines-Brock	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		
St George-St David			

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 1 December 1998

Mardi 1^{er} décembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 December 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} décembre 1998

The House met at 1831.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Mr Sterling moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to strengthen environmental protection and enforcement / Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à affermir la protection de l'environnement et les mesures d'exécution à cet égard.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): It's a pleasure for me to speak here tonight on this bill. This bill, and the work towards it, has been going on for a long period of time. In fact, I'm led to believe that this work actually started under the previous government some three or four years ago. It was unfortunate that that government wasn't able to pull it together in order to introduce it in the Legislature.

However, notwithstanding that his government went down to defeat, the former Minister of Environment was successful in the last election. I'm talking about Bud Wildman, the member for Algoma, who is here with us tonight, and of course I expect he will participate in this debate. Some people would allege that Mr Wildman took some of that knowledge that he gained as a former minister and introduced a piece of legislation in the past known as Bill 24. This Bill 24 was a private member's bill which this Legislature voted unanimously in favour of, but the bill came to an end when we prorogued last December. It died, as do all bills, on prorogation.

I know my staff have worked with the member for Algoma and this bill embodies a lot of the parts that were included in Bill 24 but actually goes beyond Bill 24 in that it not only includes matters dealing with waste, but also deals with the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act, particularly the Pesticides Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act. This bill deals with all three acts.

The genesis of this bill and the reason it came to us through the ministry was that over a long period of time former legislators have brought pieces of legislation here

dealing with those three pieces of legislation which I just mentioned, the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act, and the penalties that were imposed or dealt with in those acts didn't match up with each other.

Today I want to deal with some of these problems in this bill and put them forward, because putting them forward together — by having this act together and by having the same kind of remedies for our courts, for our environmental officers to deal with in an administrative sense and for our public to know what the laws are and what the penalties are — is very important. It's also important that all three of the acts treat polluters in the same manner and with a much heavier hand than we have in the past, and this is what this new Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act is all about.

Bill Saunderson, the member for Eglinton, will be sharing the leadoff time and will talk about a level playing field for law-abiding businesses. One of the things I'm sure he will point out is that we have, in large part, businesses which want to comply with our environmental laws, but there are bad actors. The problem is that if you don't enforce your environmental laws, the bad actors have a competitive edge over the people who are following the laws. That's what Mr Saunderson will be talking about.

Harry Danford, the MPP for Hastings-Peterborough, will share some thoughts with us on how the act will help the ministry enforce the laws relating to illegal waste practices. Mr Danford, as you know, representing Hastings-Peterborough, has within his constituency, and I'm sure he may talk about it briefly, the Deloro mine site.

I've described the Deloro mine site as one of the worst environmental disasters this province has ever seen. Deloro is a very, very small town north of Highway 7 up in Hastings county. At the turn of the century it employed thousands of people in the mining sector, in the smelting sector and in the refining sector and really left the place a disaster. Previous governments have done some work on the Deloro mine site and we are at this very point in time doing significant work there as well, but there's lots of work ahead.

We spent about \$10 million — we the Ontario taxpayers — in dealing with the Deloro mine site. It's likely that we, the taxpayers, are going to have to spend twice as much again, perhaps as much as \$18 million to \$20 million to deal with that particular site. But one of Mr Danford's great interests in the environment sprang from

his desire to see this particular problem dealt with in his own constituency.

As I said, the problem we've had in the past is that regulatory and legislative tools to ensure compliance and enforcement were introduced some time ago. Most of them are as much as 20 years old and they've been put forward piecemeal. Unfortunately, offenders have been able under some of these rules, notwithstanding that they have been breaking them, to continue to operate, knowing that our ministry's hands were tied by our own laws.

Compounding the problem, as I said before, was the inconsistency in what the penalties were under the three different acts that I mentioned previously. This has caused confusion not only for the public but also for our environmental officers applying those laws.

1840

The Ministry of the Environment's legislation has lagged behind other Canadian jurisdictions in making available the use of modern compliance tools such as administrative monetary structures. An administrative monetary structure is a step in which the ministry can hand out a fine if someone is, for instance, not complying with the reporting mechanisms. In the past, the ministry has been faced with one of two choices: Either we allow the business, the polluter or whatever, to not comply with the record-keeping that's required in order to track down exactly what's happening or to take small steps to clear up a particular problem, or we prosecute. We were faced with a wide gulf between either taking no action or taking action which required a great deal of investigative resources, required court time, required that not only from the crown or the ministry but also required that from the citizens.

We are now introducing by this particular statute what we call administrative monetary structures, which have been introduced in other Canadian and American jurisdictions. Clearly these reforms are needed to bring our province in line with other jurisdictions to deter and punish polluters and protect our environment.

I believe the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act goes further than Mr Wildman's bill, which I mentioned before, and brings us up to the same level, and perhaps even a little bit beyond where some of the other jurisdictions are, in being the toughest in North America. That's why I'm very proud of this package. I believe when members of the opposition and members of my party read this and members of the public read this, there will be strong support for this law.

In each of the areas covered by the act, we are increasing our ministry's capabilities to deter and punish those who do not obey the law. I can't stress enough that while the act will make life more difficult for polluters, it is also designed to make it fair for those who obey the law, because of course the lawful operators too are victims of polluters. For too long the field hasn't been level for those who have followed the law and those who have not.

When justice did come, sometimes it wasn't as tough as we would have liked it. This is through no fault of our courts, because they've done, I believe, the best with the

tools that we gave them as legislators. Even with stiff fines that have been handed out in the past, it has been very difficult to collect them. Since 1985, those convicted of pollution offences have gotten away with some \$10 million in unpaid fines. In addition to the ability to hand out higher fines, we will also have a greater ability to actually collect them. As I look back over the years in terms of the outstanding fines, for instance, in 1995 I believe there were probably fines in the neighbourhood of \$3 million or \$3.5 million that courts handed out, and \$2 million of that remains outstanding. In 1994, there was \$1.2 million outstanding.

The other part I'd like to talk about is when we're talking about fines, there has been some criticism of this government about the amounts of the monetary fines that have been levied before and after we came into power. That has happened because the kind of fines that had been handed out in the past were different than the kind of fines that are now handed out through the court system. Not only are the courts now looking to saying to someone, "You are fined \$30,000, pay the court," they are making what we call creative fines or penalties in a greater sense than they were before. For instance, in 1995, the first year we were in power, in addition to giving fines, the courts made over \$260,000 in other fines of, I guess, penal action against a particular polluter. They would order, for instance, community service. They would order a company to spend money on education. They've been ordered to donate money, \$298,000 in 1995, they've been ordered to give restitution, over \$1 million, and they've been ordered to do remediation, fix up the site, of over \$1 million.

In addition to actual fines, we're also concerned with actually having some of the problems dealt with and some of the people who have been harmed given back the money that is needed to clean up the mess. Our proposals will mean that fines are collected. If the fines aren't collected, under this new legislation the courts will have greater authority to order restitution. Under the old law the courts didn't have as much power as they are given under this particular law to say to a polluter: "Look, you're not only paying a fine, but you're also going to pay to clean up the mess and you're going to pay a certain individual who has suffered and who has cleaned up the mess. You're going to pay him back for what he has done to clean up that mess." This takes into account that particular matter.

Also under this act there may in fact be even fewer prosecutions than there are at the present time because what this law does is it allows our officers to take immediate action. What they can do is, they can seize the licence plates, for instance, of an illegal waste hauler right off the truck. They can freeze that truck and keep it from continuing to break the law, so that we can really get at the bad actors and we can get at the bad actors immediately. Of course there are a few provisions within the legislation, as any fair piece of legislation would have, so the person who had their licence plates seized would have access to an appeal procedure to get the licence

plates back if they can show they aren't going to continue breaking the law.

The Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act also streamlines the process by which the environmental officers issue a compliance order in the field. Traditionally in the past, only directors have the authority to issue field orders. Field orders require certain actions to stop a problem from either continuing or developing into a polluting problem. What we're doing here under this legislation is, we're really devolving the power to issue a field order down one level. We're giving that power to the person who's on the front line, so they will be able to go in and issue the order. There will be an appeal procedure in case an environmental officer steps out of line, which can happen, or is confused about the law etc. There will be an appeal procedure to his or her director to ensure that the person against whom the order is being issued has every right to question that particular order. But what it does is, it stops what's happening or starts the correction action immediately.

I've talked about administrative monetary penalties before. Those are penalties which can be given for what we would not term as major polluting offences, but they are offences which, because of our lack of having this kind of an enforcement tool in the past, perhaps what has happened in the past was that some of these activities have been ignored, for instance, reporting and those kinds of things.

The maximum administrative penalty allowed in this act is some \$5,000. There's no need for any company to have an administrative penalty levied against it. Of course, again, they can appeal any kind of administrative penalty to the court system as well. But they will in fact make certain that everybody is playing by the same rules and everybody must follow those rules.

1850

The Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act will also enable my officers to secure areas and facilities to ensure that evidence is protected. In the past, this has been a hindrance to my officers. We have an example where one of my environmental officers went to a particular site. There was evidence of certain material being on the property of this business. My officer went off to get a court order in order to secure the site and to secure the evidence. By the time they had returned, the material was gone, the evidence was lost and therefore the prosecution could not be carried forward.

I also want to talk about our investigation force just before I sit down and pass this off to my colleagues Mr Danford and Mr Sanderson. I want to make it clear that our Ministry of the Environment office has not lost one inspector since we came to power. We have cut down on the administration of the investigations branch by a few number of people, but the investigations branch, in terms of the inspectors, did not lose one inspector. In fact, we have in our ministry more inspectors than Canada has for all of Canada under its Department of Environment. I'd also point out that in the near future, in the next year or so,

we will be increasing the inspection and investigations branch.

I want to make it clear to everyone, because I've heard the opposition make this charge, that the charge is without foundation, without fact. We have made some savings in some other areas, but we have been very careful in terms of our enforcement ability in this ministry.

This act itself will do a great deal to improve our ability to enforce our present laws. As you know, we have gone through a tremendous regulatory reform process to make our regulations tougher, stronger and clearer. We are now going through a process of bringing forward a new act which will make our enforcement tougher and stronger. I believe that this act should be supported by all members of the Legislature. I'm sure they will. I know that you're looking forward to hearing from Mr Danford, who is going to talk more about illegal waste disposal.

I want to talk a little bit before I sit down about one of the great parts of this act to improve our ability in terms of investigation for surveillance. This act allows us to go to the court first to get permission to install tracking devices on vehicles that we suspect of offences against our environmental laws. At the present time, the only way that we can follow a particular truck is by putting a huge amount of resources. We may have to put four or five cars in order to follow a particular illegal waste hauler. By putting an electronic device on it, we can save a lot of our resources so that we can do even more than we are at the present time.

Another new, modern technique which again would be allowed through the use of a court order would be to plant a particular substance in a load of waste and you'd be able to follow that as you would a fingerprint. You could tell where that load of waste was dumped or left or whatever. What this act really does is bring us into the 20th century and into the next century, the 21st century, in terms of the enforcement tools which my officers will be able to use.

I've outlined a number of the proposals contained in this act. They have one common goal: to be fair to those who comply with our environmental laws but to be tough on those who break them.

I'm now going to allow my colleagues to express some of their thoughts about this act. I'll conclude by saying that I believe that this act is an excellent piece of legislation that would empower the ministry to do a much more effective job in ensuring compliance with and enforcing the law it administers.

I'd like to thank my staff, who have worked very hard on putting this act together in a fairly short period of time, in the last three months. Without their work and their expertise, this excellent work would not be together. The result will be much stronger protection for our air, water and land.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Eglinton.

Mr William Sanderson (Eglinton): First of all, I'd like to say that it's a great honour for me to speak after my esteemed colleague, the Honourable Norman Sterling, who I think diligently manages his very important port-

folio in a very creditable way, so it's a great pleasure for me to follow him.

I'm pleased to rise tonight to speak about Bill 82, and in support of it, by the way, because it is an act which will strengthen environmental protection and enforcement. Those are very good goals to look for. We're all aware of the need to protect our environment. Over the past decade we've become recyclers, not only in this province but around the world. An example for all of us is the blue box program, which I think has worked very well.

I think our young people are much more aware of the fragility of our surroundings than we were, and I hope we are becoming much more aware of the fragility of our surroundings, just as our young people have. We're working hard to catch up with them. I really think this bill goes a long way to enforcing some of the things that our young people want to see enforced and I'm sure they will applaud this bill.

I think Mr Sterling has provided the House with a very compelling case why our air, water and land will be better protected with the passage of Bill 82. He has highlighted his bottom line for this legislation and that is to provide the most effective environmental protection possible.

Today I had the opportunity to meet with the consular corps which is based here in Toronto. It represents the countries that have consul generals here in the city. I had a chance to talk with some of them at this event and I asked them the reasons why they are enjoying their time in Ontario and particularly in Toronto. They said to me that they're impressed with the cultural life of this province, they are impressed with our clean and safe cities, communities that allow children to basically be unmolested and be free to play and enjoy life. But one of the things they did mention was that they enjoyed and respected our concern for our environment. I think that says a lot and I think that's what this bill is talking about. It reflects our concern about our environment.

Ecotourism is a growing market in our province. People come from around the world to enjoy the wilderness experience in the north. They come from Germany, the United States, Japan. They appreciate something that very few countries have. We certainly are a leader in ecotourism. This again represents our concern about the environment, that we have this to offer to people, and the reputation of our concerns about our environment. We must protect our environment and we must be worthy of the admiration of other countries and the people of those countries for what we have in this province.

1900

I'd like to focus my remarks on the effects that this legislation would have on businesses. I know other speakers will address other aspects of the bill, as Mr Danford will be doing after me.

There's an unwritten code for businesses and the way they should operate. In the long term it is in their best interests to follow this code. Most businesses do. The code basically says: "Be ethical. Be good corporate citizens. Be honest and operate with integrity, not only with your

employees and your clients, but with the environment." All of this makes common sense.

I think Bill 82 is a way to level the playing field for all Ontario businesses and individuals. We must not forget that most businesses play by the rules and are prepared to meet the tough standards that we have set out here in Ontario as far as the environment is concerned. It is not enough to enact legislation and strong protection laws such as we have in Ontario. I commend previous governments for doing this. Particularly, although he's not here right now, I'd like to congratulate the member for Algoma, Mr Bud Wildman, for his work in this area. The bottom line is that we must ensure that these laws are enforced and that those who break these laws are punished. You have to pay the piper when you do not obey the laws.

It only takes a couple of bad apples to spoil the reputation we have in Ontario as far as the environment is concerned. But these bad apples spoil it for all of us. In the past, it has been all too easy for unscrupulous operators to get away with environmental offences. We read about them in the newspaper, sad stories where people and companies have just not paid attention to what should be done. They have continued to pollute, while the ministry lacks the proper tools to enforce the laws.

If the laws don't have the teeth, then people don't mind the bite of the laws because it doesn't hurt; they can get away basically unscathed. Sometimes they played a kind of shell game to avoid paying the fines assessed to them. Or, if they had been fined, they got off with very light sentences. Some operators have learned how to avoid the rules, to their advantage. Meanwhile, responsible operators, who could have played the same shell games or avoided the rules, have fortunately chosen not to do so. The result of this situation is that there is an advantage for the polluters, those companies, those few bad apples, that spoil it for all the rest of the good operators in this province. This can't go on. That's why Bill 82 is being presented now.

Since 1985, convicted polluters have gotten away with some \$10 million in uncollected fines. That's not acceptable, yet this money remains uncollected. Sometimes we can't level the moral playing field, but we can enhance the powers of the government to enforce what the rules should be. What I'd like to see, because of Bill 82, is that it's going to enable the ministry to meet its commitment to act decisively when a violation has been discovered — something that has not been possible before. It's also going to help the ministry identify and achieve more convictions of the few who break the law to gain an advantage over their competitors. Sometimes people lie and cheat to get an advantage. They don't do what I consider is the proper course, of following the code of ethics for businesses that I outlined earlier. I think that's shocking, and something must be done about it.

The other victim of environmental offences is the taxpayer. In many instances it's the taxpayer who has to foot the bill to clean up the mess left by those who break the law or refuse to be held accountable for their actions.

Scrupulous businesses and the taxpayers of Ontario will welcome the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act. Our government is committed to protecting the taxpayer as well as the environment. We want a spirit of equity and fair play for all of Ontario. This act will improve our effectiveness in dealing with repeat offenders, forcing polluters to clean up and forcing convicted polluters to pay the fines that have been imposed upon them. As Minister Sterling ably mentioned, the tools available in Ontario lag behind those of other Canadian jurisdictions. We usually lead in this province. We have to catch up as far as the environment is concerned. We are doing that with this bill.

We need to give our ministry officials the ability to get the job done. This act will make it far less appealing to shortcut Ontario's environmental laws. One of the advantages of having a law such as this is that it gives the ministry a chance to embarrass companies that are not paying attention to the rules. One of the most telling things for a company is an embarrassment. Companies don't want to be embarrassed; they want to be seen as playing the game. I think this is going to put some teeth into our environmental laws.

There are examples of companies that have abused the system for their own advantage. The minister gave one example, which I thought was quite glaring. I'd like to talk for a few minutes about how this act will help the ministry achieve its compliance and enforcement goals more effectively and efficiently.

Bill 82 gives the ministry the authority to make use of administrative monetary policies. Currently, only the courts can impose penalties on polluters. These monetary policies give the ministry's directors the ability to enforce compliance with provincial regulations and the requirements set out in ministry instruments such as permits, approvals and orders. Administrative monetary policies are not fines and they are not a replacement for prosecution in the courts, but they are a new vehicle.

I want to stress here that Bill 82 does not create any new offences; it creates solutions to existing possible offences. What we're doing is simply using administrative monetary penalties to ensure compliance with existing rules. I believe this is the fair way to proceed and the only way to proceed. Fairness is one of the guiding principles behind this ministry's environmental reforms, creating fair and reasonable standards that apply to everyone. Notice I say "everyone," because I want to emphasize again, there are companies that do not follow what I call the rules of fair play. Those are the companies that we want to catch with this new legislation.

I think it's going to speed up our ability to reach solutions to pollution problems. Minor offences often do not reach court because of the time and cost involved. This will bring to justice in a hurry companies that have been avoiding doing the right thing. That means that many of these offences that I referred to do continue, and the offenders don't feel compelled to stop what they're doing. With this act, they're going to soon realize there is

something there to make them comply in the same way that other companies are complying.

Quite frankly, you could compare this to the old parking ticket system, where some people never paid their parking tickets until apprehended. Now, under the new system, you cannot renew your licence if you have any parking fines outstanding. This is the type of legislation which is going to make sure that these companies cannot go on and on abusing the system.

I'm confident that the use of administrative monetary policies will allow the ministry officials to respond to minor pollution offences in a timely fashion, but will not prevent prosecution through the court system for more serious offences.

There are a series of checks and balances provided in this legislation to protect individuals and businesses from unnecessary fines and punishments. I think that's an important consideration. We want to be very careful to define what the offences are and to make sure that innocent companies aren't caught up in sometimes over-indulgent investigations.

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Another way we will ensure a level playing field for responsible operators and the taxpayer is with higher maximum fines for environmental offenders, and additional offences for which prison terms can be used as punishment. Through administrative and monetary measures and the more modern surveillance methods mentioned by the minister, the ministry will be able to address more non-compliant situations.

It's important that we realize that the minister has brought to his ministry the more modern ways of thinking as far as surveillance is concerned. There are new systems, and he is making sure that his ministry has those in place. With the surveillance techniques we talk about being proposed under the act, ministry investigators will be able to track more situations simultaneously. I am sure because of that the environment will be much better protected.

Business the world over looks for jurisdictions where the climate for doing business is predictable, with no surprises. What we're laying out here is a set of guidelines and rules that businesses must follow. When a business is looking to come to Ontario, make an investment, develop economically and create jobs, all of those things that all of us want, regardless of party in this House, we want those companies to be able to ask the legal people they may be employing to help them come to our province and get started as businesses. They want to be told what is expected from them. This bill is going to lay out some guidelines so that they know what's expected of them when they come here. After all, economic development and job creation are the most important aspects for this government and I'm sure for all members in this House.

It's important that these companies realize that in Ontario the provincial regulations we're talking about concerning pollution are going to be enforced and polluters will be penalized. We're getting our message out

to companies that are thinking of coming here and, of course, to those that are already here as well.

When the Minister of the Environment introduced this legislation, he stated that it would improve the ministry's ability to enforce the laws safeguarding our air, water and land. I agree with him. I could go on with reasons why I believe the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act is great news for Ontario, but I'd like to turn over the floor to my colleague Harry Danford.

Before I conclude, I'd like to say that this legislation is an excellent starting point. It's always hard to have the most perfect legislation, but this is a very good starting point of giving guidelines to companies that are very enforceable.

I think everyone in this place is committed to the protection of our environment. I have seven grandchildren. I want them to be able to enjoy the best possible environment in Ontario. That is why I think Bill 82 is going to go a long way to help their enjoyment and other children's enjoyment. It's important that we attack now and make sure that our environment is protected. I want the government to protect the province's air, water and land. I support Bill 82.

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): I'm delighted this evening to have the opportunity to follow my colleagues the Honourable Norm Sterling and William Saunderson. Like my colleagues, I believe the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act will help the Ontario government and the Ministry of the Environment meet some very important goals we have set, namely, a well-protected environment and a growing economy.

I want to focus my comments on how the act will help the ministry do a better job of enforcing the provisions of provincial legislation pertaining to waste. From time to time I'll touch on other types of offences that the ministry will be in a better position to address, in my opinion, with this new legislation.

The high incidence of illegal waste practices is one of the prime motivating factors for this legislation. The case study that was used by my colleague William Saunderson is a prime example of how those who engage in illegal waste operations have been able to flourish in Ontario because of limitations on the ability of ministry staff to counter their activities. The new act contains a series of provisions that will turn this situation around and give ministry staff the tools they need to combat illegal waste practices in Ontario.

I want to expand on a few of these provisions and how they will help the ministry crack down on illegal waste and protect Ontario's environment.

The first provision I want to comment on is investigative aids. This is a new capability for the ministry, because there are no provisions in existing environmental legislation for the use of such techniques to help in the surveillance of suspected environmental offences. Surveillance as we all know is very labour-intensive. The ministry must devote several officers as well as substantial resources to each and every case where there is a suspicion that illegal waste activities may be occurring.

For instance, it can take as many as five vehicles and the inspectors to staff them to conduct that surveillance. Staff obviously can't be in two places at once, with the result being a limitation on the number of surveillance operations that can be carried out in the province at any one time.

Under the act, ministry staff can use investigative aid after first obtaining a court order. These aids can be either electronic tracking devices or tracking substances. An electronic device can be planted on a vehicle suspected of being engaged in illegal waste activities, and it will enable the ministry staff to track where loads of waste are going and what facilities are involved.

I want to emphasize that there will be very high standards that must be met for ministry staff to get court approval to place these tracking devices and substances. They'll need to show good reason why they believe an offence is being, or is about to be, committed.

The tracking substances I refer to can be placed in a load of waste to act the same as a fingerprint. If a substance is put in, say, waste that the ministry has reason to believe is going to be used illegally, investigators can do a test for the presence of that planted substance. Tracking substances could be very useful because wastes are notoriously difficult to trace, as we all know. One possibility would be the use of a dye in CFCs. These two types of tracking — electronic devices and substances — are complementary; one can be used to track a vehicle while the other tracks a particular load of waste.

Another provision of the act is the ability of ministry officers to secure the site of an environmental offence. For example, in a case where hazardous liquid waste has been dumped in the middle of a heavily populated area, if this were to happen today, ministry staff would not have the authority to cordon off the area. By giving staff this authority, the act would help protect both public health, by keeping the people away from a potentially harmful substance, and the integrity of the investigation.

The act proposes giving ministry officers the ability to use flashing red lights on their vehicles as they pull over vehicles suspected of involvement in activities against the environment, including waste offences. Right now, officers can pull over vehicles but they can only do this by pulling alongside the other vehicle with a badge or when they happen to be riding shotgun with the police. With the authority to use flashing red lights, ministry investigators will have the autonomy and the credibility to safely pull suspected offenders over. They will also increase safety for other motorists when vehicles are stopped at the side of the road. A flashing red light increases the visibility of the stopped vehicles and protects everyone's safety along the road.

Like MNR and MTO officers, MOE officers would have to obey all traffic rules. The purpose of the red lights would be just to stop the vehicles.

One very important provision of the proposed legislation is the authority to seize the plates and permits of vehicles suspected of being involved in illegal waste activities. The current provisions are too restrictive.

Seizure can only be done in cases involving liquid hazardous waste or cases where a continued operation could lead to serious environmental effects.

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Ministry staff will be able to stop the continuation of offences such as illegal transportation of waste. If an unlicensed waste transporter has its plates seized, it will only be able to continue after the load has been transferred to a lawful transporter.

This gives the ministry a very powerful tool, something they haven't had before, in dealing with dangerous and repetitive environmental offenders. A primary objective of the authority to seize, along with other proposed amendments contained in the act, is the ability to seize the tools of the trade of dangerous and habitual offenders.

My colleague Bill Saunderson has already touched on administrative monetary penalties, so I really won't add too much to what he's already said. But one example of how these penalties could be applied is a licensed waste transfer station. Monetary penalties could be imposed to deal with such problems as dust or too much waste stored on that site.

Provincial officers' orders are included in the act to require the cleanup of wastes, to require that a facility obtain a certificate of approval or to require that a facility meet the terms and conditions of that certification.

These orders could also be used in conjunction with the seizure of plates. Following the seizure of the plates for, an unlicensed waste hauler, ministry staff could then order that the waste be transferred to a licensed hauler and only then could those plates be returned.

One of the biggest frustrations the ministry has had with respect to illegal waste operations is the restrictions on who they could go after. As the legislation now stands, only those who actually illegally deposit the waste can be charged for the offence.

Everyone knows there are more people than that involved, such as brokers who make arrangements for illegal dumping and tell transporters of waste where to put that load. There have been cases where people have put padlocks on property they don't even own and then have charged others a fee for the use of the property as a disposal site. Now, individuals who facilitate, arrange for or broker illegal dumping can be charged. Often, it's the people who don't dirty their hands with the actual waste who really are the dirtiest.

The provision in the act for orders to remove waste is also applicable to those people who generate and broker illegal waste. Again, the current legislation hasn't been applicable to those on the so-called periphery of waste offences. They are, of course, as much at the heart of the crime as are the people who physically do the dumping. Usually they're the masterminds using others to simply carry out their illegal schemes.

One of the greatest satisfactions with the proposed legislation is the authority to throw those who fail to comply with cleanup orders in jail. I think we all agree that the threat of jail time for some of those masterminds

has the potential to put a real dent in their illegal operations.

One other way of getting at everyone involved in the commission of illegal waste practices is enhanced provisions for the service of summonses as proposed under the act. Existing provisions again only enable the ministry officers to hand out summonses to the drivers of the vehicles and not to the companies. We propose giving officers the authority to present summonses to drivers on behalf of the companies they represent. This too would give us greater ability to bring to justice the out-of-province or the out-of-country haulers involved in illegal waste practices in our province.

A major problem associated with illegal dumping has been its effects on innocent property owners. I think we've all seen evidence of this over the years. We've seen too many cases, for example, of the illegal dumping of tires on a property owned by an unsuspecting, law-abiding citizen. These victims have been left with a hefty cleanup bill and little recourse to collect, even if someone is convicted of the crime.

Right now, that recourse is suing the illegal dumper. This is obviously very difficult, costly and time-consuming for the victims. They're being made victims twice over by having to go through court action. The act contains provisions that would enable the courts to order convicted polluters to pay the restitution directly to the victims and save that extra step.

The forfeiture provisions of the act are another way to get perpetrators of environmental offences to pay up for the harm they've done. Again, it's a case of taking the tools of the trade away from those who break Ontario's environmental laws. For example, vehicles engaged in the commission of an offence could be seized. Following conviction, the polluter would have to pay all the penalties before getting those vehicles back. Failure to pay up would result in forfeiture. I think we'll all agree that's a great deterrent, something that's been lacking and something we needed to have added in this legislation.

I'll just take perhaps a moment to address something that the minister referred to in his remarks. It relates to an area in my riding, the area of Deloro. It certainly has been a problem for a number of years and has been of great concern to the residents of my area. I think it's fair to say, for the benefit of the members present, that I reside less than 10 kilometres from this particular site so I have been well aware of it. Actually, it's been ongoing for longer than I've had the privilege of being around. But I recognize that there is an immediate need to deal with this particular instance and this issue.

Just to give you a little bit of background, in the early 1980s the MOE did take action. It was under the same PC government that they chose to take action to contain the problem, and we did a lot of remedial work.

This problem, to go back a little bit further, was created over the last number of decades. It's been long-standing and actually was abandoned by the company that created the problem. There has been no recourse to make them accountable. If we had been in a different situation, the

ministry would have had much more available to try and bring this thing under control and have them be held accountable for it, but nothing happened for the last 10 years since that first initial cleanup and containment action was taken.

Last year, as the minister mentioned, I, along with some of my colleagues, was able to have him visit the site. He had a first-hand view of the overall site with local residents, people who had worked there, not just ministry staff, to bring him up to date, to make him well aware of what actually happened there and the background on the site. Following that, we did initiate a process through the ministry. Studies have been ongoing and hopefully those results and the recommendations will come early next year.

Certainly the testing has tried to bring about a complete solution to this problem. We went beyond the site that's actually contaminated because we did want to assure the residents that if there was a problem beyond the borders of that particular property, it also was addressed. Once and for all we wanted to know exactly what we had to deal with and to provide the best possible solution. I want to say that it is a real relief to those residents that finally something has been initiated and will provide what we hope will be the final conclusion to this long-standing issue that has been a cloud hanging over that particular community.

I might also say, though, just to make sure that no one has misunderstood, one thing that has been the case in that small hamlet is that there has never been a problem with the water supply, and tests have continuously determined that. There's always been quality water and there certainly has been no opportunity for any concern there. But it is great to see that something is coming about and hopefully that will be addressed when we have the final recommendations early next year.

I think I'll end my remarks there. I want to thank you for the opportunity to make a few remarks here about this new act, the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act. I'm confident it will be a very important addition to the Ministry of the Environment's ability, in my opinion, to administer environmental justice in this province and I think it's been long overdue. It certainly will help the ministry in its ongoing fight against illegal waste activities and lead to a cleaner, healthier environment in the province of Ontario. I think all of us in this House should support legislation that meets that goal.

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The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm glad to have an opportunity to respond very briefly. Our critic, the member for Hamilton East, will be responding in more detail.

There's no question this is legislation that I think needs to come forward and it's legislation that we need to support from the point of view that we need every tool we can to crack down on companies and individuals that are polluting Ontario's environment. But the great concern we have, and the minister made some reference to it, is that it

really is going to be toothless unless there are adequate staff and resources to actually make this legislation something that can be enforced.

Regardless of what the minister may say, the facts are clear. Since taking office, Minister, your government has cut the Ministry of the Environment staff by 36%, 880-plus jobs, cut your budget by 42%, and particularly hard hit has been the compliance and enforcement branch, the fact that it's been cut from 97 to 70 staff in the past three years.

There's no question, Minister, that the legislation is something that we've been looking for. My colleague from Algoma had his private member's bill two years ago. Bill 24, was it? This is in essence a follow-up on that. We want to support it but we really think it's crucial for you to acknowledge that this cannot be an effective piece of legislation unless the enforcement capability is there. Clearly, it's not. You made reference in your remarks to the fact that there's been no real cut in staff; you made some cuts to administration. That just isn't the case. When you've got the compliance and enforcement branch cuts taking place as they have, obviously that makes a huge difference.

The truth is, you've been called on the carpet by the auditor, who has criticized the Ministry of the Environment in the past because of 226 air standards that were identified as needing to be updated in 1992 had not been updated. There's a variety of ways that you need to acknowledge that you haven't done the job. We hope that you'll recognize that this bill will not be effective unless there's the staff to make sure it's capably done.

Mr Blain K. Morin (Nickel Belt): I would like to start off by thanking the member for Algoma, Mr Wildman, for his part in this bill in providing the framework to the government.

However, I would like to go over a couple of the concerns that I have around the bill. Some interesting notes in an article called *Nothing Left to Cut*, which is a field report on the activities of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Energy. It quotes that since May 1996, field pesticide staff have been cut by 40%, eliminating positions in Peterborough, Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie, Chatham and Hamilton.

We're really concerned, and you will hear Mr Wildman highlight some of those concerns, about the inspections and investigations and who we have left to staff and enforce this piece of legislation. In fact, I might add that in my community of Sudbury and Nickel Belt this is a very important piece of legislation, especially around the environment.

I heard the minister tonight tell us that we shouldn't worry about inspections; in fact, we're going to increase staff. I'd like to briefly quote from the *Toronto Star* of December 1 where it says, "The Mike Harris Tories say they're thinking of dumping another 13,500 public servants on top of the 16,500," you've already dumped.

Minister, the concern we have about this bill is, who is going to be left to enforce it? We can talk about innovative ways, but we're looking at a ministry that's

already been cut back to the bone, just like the Ministry of Natural Resources. Here we are tonight and the minister tells us, "It's going to be all right, we're going to add staff."

Minister, I hope you come true to that challenge, and I look forward to Mr Wildman's remarks.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I'm pleased to take my two minutes and compliment the Minister of the Environment for bringing Bill 82 forward.

For many years, and some time ago now, I remember the Premier saying that we're going to have the toughest environmental law but you are going to know where you stand and it's going to be enforceable. I think this bill is going to do that.

When I look at the illegal dumping that's taking place across this province and in my riding specifically, when I look at some of the old tire dumps that are on side roads, there is a need for enforcement to make sure it's cleaned up.

I'm sure that every municipality will be happy to see this piece of legislation. In my years on municipal council there was always somebody who would never clean up. It was a mess and the neighbours would complain and it was a real problem. Who had the jurisdiction? You'd go to the Ministry of the Environment and they didn't seem to have the tools to do it. I hope that this piece of legislation gives them the tools to do it.

The issue with regard to corporations polluting: I wonder what's going to happen, and it's really a question, if there's a bypass in a sewage disposal system that goes out into the bay. My information on this bill is that the fine is \$100,000 for the first day and it could be \$200,000 for the second day, so I'm sure that the engineers who are in charge of those facilities are going to try and make sure that there's going to be no sewage bypass into our waterways.

This bill amends the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act. I think the latter part may be the most important part of this bill, because there are many environmentalists who are concerned about the pesticides that we're using.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What seems to be missing from this bill is it doesn't seem to apply to the Niagara Escarpment Act and that's what I'm worried about. If I wanted to criticize the present Minister of the Environment in 100 different areas, one area I would not criticize him is in his commitment to preserving the Niagara Escarpment.

I remember that the Premier had so much confidence in this minister that he stole it away. He just got in and wrestled it away. Norm was standing there, he was tugging away with the Premier and the Premier wrestled away the Niagara Escarpment Commission from the only person I know in cabinet — there are a few others, but in cabinet — who cared about the Niagara Escarpment Commission. He gave it to the good old boys and the good old boys put their friends on the Niagara Escarpment Commission and now the sky is the limit. They're approving condominiums and a culinary school and all kinds of

things. The sky's the limit. We'll have the Hilton and the Holiday Inn and Howard Johnson, everything on the escarpment. Ski developments, you name it, estate housing, you'll have all kinds of things on the escarpment.

I was hoping that this bill would at least apply to the Niagara Escarpment because I know of the member's commitment, my friend Norm Sterling's commitment, to preserving the Niagara Escarpment plan which he helped to develop. In fact, he was the provincial secretary for resources development when the plan was developed. In other words, he played a very significant role.

The Premier, seeing that the escarpment was going to be protected with Norm Sterling there, took it right away from him and plunked it down into the ministry of the exploitation of natural resources and there it lies.

I'm wondering if the member has any comment on that particular aspect of this legislation. I'll be interested in hearing it.

The Deputy Speaker: Reply? The Chair recognizes the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Mr Sterling: Of course this legislation relates to legislation in terms of the environmental officers of the Ministry of the Environment and does not relate to other, extraneous matters, although very important matters.

I understand the criticism but I want to assure the members of the Legislature that we do have the staff to implement this bill. As I mentioned originally, the number of investigative officers in the field has not been cut. That is a matter of record.

Unlike previous governments, which incidentally spent all the money so that we had to be in a position of actually making some savings in order for us to be able to deliver worthwhile programs to the people of Ontario, we are doing better with less. We are addressing problems which were not addressed by previous governments.

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The Provincial Auditor brought forward a recommendation two years ago with regard to air quality standards. His criticism was not of the present government; his criticism was of governments for the past 20 years that had not revamped the air quality standards in this province. We are embarking on that. We are working on that. It is a difficult task, but we are doing it. Previous governments looked at things like the Drive Clean program, a vehicle emissions testing program, but they didn't have the courage to go ahead and do it. We are addressing the problems.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to join the debate and split the time with my colleague from St Catharines, Mr Bradley, a former minister and, according to many credible organizations across the province, probably the most effective environment minister we've had in the history of this province. Clearly, there are a lot of lessons to be learned by the current government and the current minister on how to deal with the environment.

When you look at this bill, on the surface it's motherhood and apple pie. If someone came in from another

jurisdiction and knew nothing about this province in the last three and a half or four years, knew nothing about what this government and this minister have done, they'd look at the bill and say, "Hey, this is wonderful." If you lived on another planet and you were dropped here in Ontario and looked at this bill, you'd say, "Hey, this is good stuff." On the surface, how can you argue against this? As I said, it's motherhood, apple pie and all the things that make Canada and America great.

The reality is that all it is, again, is this government and this minister talking the talk but not walking the walk. You have to look at the credibility issue; you have to look at the record of this government and this minister when you say, "How effective is this bill going to be?" When I listened to the minister earlier, I thought he was talking about a different jurisdiction or a different minister. He spoke as if he or his government haven't been in charge of the environment for the last three and a half years. It took two years to steal a good idea from the member for Algoma. You could have brought that in. The bill the member for Algoma brought in two years ago, you could have brought in as legislation then. But you failed to act. You had the opportunity, and you failed to act. Now we're within six months to a year of an election campaign and we're getting the deathbed confessions of this government when it comes to environmental protection. This is the conversion on the way to the next election campaign.

The reality is that your track record, Minister, doesn't give us any confidence at all in your ability to implement any of this legislation. Let's look at what others had to say. Forget the opposition. You may think we have an interest in criticizing you; you may think environmental groups have an interest in criticizing you because if they're trying to protect the environment, that's self-interest, according to your government. So let's look at what others have had to say about your record, your credibility as far as being able to protect the environment. How do we trust you and believe you're going to do anything differently now?

Let me quote from the Environmental Commissioner in one of her reports: "I regret to report that in the past year there has been little improvement in the actions taken by the provincial ministries towards protecting the environment." The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario is not an interest group, is not an environmental group, is not someone who's out to defeat this government. Her own statements time and time again have condemned your actions and lack of action when it comes to protecting the environment.

What have you done since you've taken office? You have crippled or eliminated 13 laws and over 80 regulations that once were the basic framework of environmental protection in Ontario. You have weakened standards in many areas. I'll go through those in a second. When you look at this bill, on the surface it sounds great, but the reality is that you now have brought in, at the end of your mandate, this big tough guy, pound-your-chest legislation: "We're going to get tough with polluters. We care about the environment. We're going to go after that industry."

But what you did in your first three and a half years was dismantle most of the standards and regulations that have been in place to protect the environment. So what regulations that are meaningful are left for you to enforce with these tough new penalties that you've brought in?

The regulations have been gutted. When you do that, how does this become effective? How does this work? It is like simply getting rid of speed limits in Ontario and saying: "You know what, folks? We don't have a problem with speeding any more." If you're not enforcing speed limits, you wouldn't have a problem with speeding any more. This is the approach you have taken to environmental protection in this province.

You have gutted the regulations. As I said, you have taken over 80 regulations that were brought in by previous governments, including the governments of Bill Davis, David Peterson and Bob Rae, and gotten rid of them. You have been told by the Provincial Auditor that there are over 120 air quality standards that need to be upgraded. Two years ago the minister promised it would be done within 12 months. What happened last month? The Provincial Auditor came back and said: "You've failed again. You have not changed or upgraded one of those regulations."

So on one hand you've got this total weakening and dismantling of regulations. On the other hand you have this total dismantling of the staff. We've spoken of the cuts that you've made. This government has fired 880 people who worked for the Ministry of the Environment since it took office. Your compliance and enforcement branch, whose responsibility is to enforce this legislation, has been cut from 97 to 70, a 30% cut in that particular branch. You have cut the Ministry of the Environment budget by \$121 million. That is the largest cut, on a percentage basis, of any ministry in this government. It occurred in the Ministry of the Environment. The largest cut in staffing on a percentage basis and the largest cut in budget on a percentage basis have occurred to the Ministry of the Environment.

You want to talk about credibility in this legislation. It's a sick joke. You have no credibility. This minister, this Premier and this government have no interest in protecting the environment. You have no credibility. Frankly, Ontarians are insulted when they sit here and listen to the minister go on about what they've done — I'd like to know what they have done — to the environment. You insult the intelligence of Ontarians by standing up and trying to defend the indefensible. That is your brutal track record when it comes to the environment.

I challenge the minister or any other member to publicly debate us, anywhere, any time, on what you have done to the environment in the past three and a half years, because you have destroyed the basic framework of environmental protection. You have sold out. Environmental laws in this province are not made in the cabinet room; they're simply made in the boardrooms on Bay Street and then passed on to the cabinet to rubber-stamp. That is a record that you should be ashamed of.

It is not a political-philosophical agenda here. Bill Davis, a Conservative, brought in many of the regulations that you have dismantled because he understood that you need a balance in this province. He understood that you need a balance between business interests and the interests of the environment, because environmental protection is also health protection.

We're not talking about some distant hug-a-tree, save-a-lake approach here. I'm not talking about that type of environmentalism. I'm talking about the fact that environmental laws in the past 15 to 20 years in this province have been brought in primarily with the interest of protecting public health, because clearly, there's a link, established beyond a shadow of a doubt, between air quality and health effects, water quality and health effects. The link has been made; no one can question that. The legislation that was brought in by previous governments was not done for some feel-good motive. It was done because it was there to protect the health of Ontarians. This government has totally abandoned those standards.

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When you listen to the government, who's right and who's wrong here? Are the minister and the backbenchers who have spoken right? If you've listened to them, they've done a wonderful job. What is the self-interest of the OMA, the Ontario Medical Association, in environmental protection? What motive would the OMA have to criticize this government when it comes to environmental protection?

What have they said? "Ontario doctors have made a diagnosis." They're talking about environmental protection here. "This is a health crisis. It needs major surgery, not cosmetic treatment. Self-regulating, voluntary standards are not going to work."

Again, that is not some environmental group out there; that is not an opposition member. That is the Ontario Medical Association. If you want to question their credibility, go ahead. If you want to question their motive, go ahead. I will not. I believe they are speaking on behalf of the patients that these 23,000 doctors represent.

Why have they come forward and criticized your government on environmental protection? Because they understand clearly that what you are doing is hurting and killing Ontarians through a lack of environmental protection. So the OMA is wrong and your government is right.

The David Suzuki Foundation: If anybody wants to question Mr Suzuki's credibility as an environmentalist, as a protector of this province, you go ahead and do it; I will not. His foundation came out with a report a month ago that deeply criticized your government's track record. The David Suzuki Foundation's report estimates that 6,000 Ontarians die prematurely every single year as a result of air quality. What do you do? You bring in legislation that toughens up the penalties but do absolutely nothing to toughen up the standards. The problem is not the penalties; the problem is your standards that suck. You've dismantled them, gotten rid of them. If you don't have standards, what good is this tough, pound-your-chest, Norm "Superman" Sterling approach to protecting the

environment going to do? Absolutely nothing. That's probably flattering to the minister. So the Provincial Auditor is wrong.

Let me just understand: The OMA is wrong when they criticize what you've done on the environment; the David Suzuki Foundation is wrong when they criticize what you've done on the environment; the Provincial Auditor is wrong when he criticizes your lack of action on the environment; the Environmental Commissioner is wrong when she criticizes your lack of action on the environment; every credible environmental group in this province is wrong when they criticize your lack of action on environmental protection; Premier Harris was wrong when he criticized the Minister of the Environment for dragging his feet on Drive Clean, publicly berated him, beat him up because he had failed to act.

It goes back to a question of credibility. Is this simply a last-minute political face-saving attempt to try to look like you've done something?

Let me remind members of the government what Premier Harris, then leader of the third party, said on June 5, 1995. He said that you would find \$6 billion in cuts in the Common Sense Revolution without one cent being cut out of the environment. That was Mike Harris, three days before the election, saying he wasn't going to cut one cent.

The government likes to spend ad money criticizing my leader for lack of clarity, as they claim, for not being definite. Let me tell you, you are right from the point of view that Mike Harris was definite. Mike Harris was definite when he said he was not going to close any hospitals in this province. We've seen the result. Mike Harris was definite when he said he was not going to bring in user fees. We've seen what he has done. Mike Harris was pretty definite and pretty clear when he said he was not going to cut one cent out of the environment. He has cut \$121 million.

Is that the Conservative definition of clarity, honesty and integrity in government? Is that what that is, when three days before the election your Premier says he will not cut one cent out of the environment and then he cuts \$121 million? You want to talk about credibility? You want to talk about commitment? It is an absolute joke. Your Premier's and your minister's commitments cannot be trusted. Your track record is clear. It is beyond dispute that you have committed that you were not going to cut one cent out of the environment, and you have cut \$121 million. That's a hell of a lot of "one cents" that didn't come out of that.

When you look at the other areas of supposed environmental protection — let's look at water quality. What have you done? Again, you talk about standards and enforcing these standards. In 1991, there were 700 water-monitoring stations across Ontario; in 1998, there are 200.

When it comes to air quality, we know the OMA has estimated 1,800 people a year die prematurely; the Suzuki Foundation estimated 6,000. On peak pollution days in this province, there's an increase of 50% in respiratory admissions to hospitals. You have closed 40% of the air monitoring stations in this province. You have not up-

graded over 120 regulations which the auditor has asked you to do. You have failed miserably.

One of the members on the government side spoke earlier about how people from different countries whom he spoke to talk about the wonderful standards we have for our environment in this province. What are we comparing ourselves to: Alabama, Central American countries, countries that have no standards? Is that what our base has become? Is that where we're going, challenging ourselves to the lowest instead of reaching for the highest? That appears to be the approach this government has taken.

Under previous governments, both NDP and Liberal governments, and particularly under Jim Bradley's term as minister, we could stand up to the Americans and go toe to toe with the Americans and say, "Folks, clean up your act," because we had done our job. The NDP did the same thing. This government has no moral or credible opportunity to go after the Americans for what they're doing to our environment because of what you have done. Most of your standards are now weaker than those of border states. How do you go to them and say, "Clean up your act on air quality. Clean up your act on emissions," when they look at us and say, "Get a life. Your standards are significantly lower than ours"? We've lost that moral and credible opportunity that we had, because of what you've done, to deal and play hardball. Your minister is too busy playing footsie with the Americans instead of playing hardball because we no longer have the credibility to go toe to toe with them.

It goes on and on. I look at my own community. In 1997, we dealt with the Plastimet fire. This was a fire that burned for four days. It was a company that was supposed to be in the business of recycling plastics, which, under your standards which you haven't upgraded or changed, does not require a certificate of approval. This company was storing plastics. A major fire occurred. There was an evacuation of 4,000 people. Firefighters have been ill and have fallen ill since the fire. Firefighters have been off work since the fire. We in the opposition and some of your backbenchers from Hamilton have asked your government time and time again to call a public inquiry into the Plastimet fire, not to lay blame but to ensure that we understand what went wrong and to put in legislation that will protect us in future.

Let me tell you, there were a number of recommendations from the fire marshal's office as a result of the fire. You've acted on very little of that. Frankly, there is nothing in place today, since the Plastimet fire occurred, that would prevent another Plastimet from occurring anywhere across this province. You have not strengthened one of those pieces of legislation that allowed that disaster to happen in Hamilton. You have done nothing to require recycling plants which deal with plastics to go after and get certificates of approval or compliance. You've done none of that.

2000

Think about this. We had this major environmental disaster that grabbed headlines across this country, that burned for four days, and a year and a half later your

government has not had the courage to change one piece of environmental legislation that would prevent another Plastimet from occurring. That's not leadership; that is gutless whimpering. You stand here and you talk about toughening up the penalties. What penalties are you going to enforce? What legislation? Why haven't you acted on Plastimet? Why haven't you toughened up the legislation?

I hope that in the opportunity to respond, one of the government members will explain to us and to the people of Hamilton why you have not changed one piece of environmental legislation that would help prevent another Plastimet fire somewhere across this province. Maybe you can explain to us the rationale behind that and relate that to this new legislation you are bringing in now. You can't go after people and polluters if you don't have the standards, if you don't have the regulations in place to enforce.

So if someone tomorrow opens up another recycling plant and says, "We're simply recycling plastic," and stores it, you have no way of stopping that. You have no mechanism for inspections and you have no mechanism for approvals by your ministry, because you've walked away from it. How does this penalty apply to someone tomorrow who wants to open up another Plastimet? How do these tough new penalties apply to those people since you don't have any standards to regulate that industry?

As I said earlier, this is an absolute sick joke to suggest that somehow this is going to improve environmental quality, environmental standards in Ontario. This legislation would make a lot of sense if you had the courage to toughen up the standards and if you had the courage to go back and reverse the 80 or 90 regulations that you've eliminated. Then you can show some leadership and credibility. But as long as you stand by your record of the last three and a half years, as long as you stand by and say that it's acceptable to dismantle the 80 or 90 regulations that we had, as long as you say that it's acceptable not to upgrade the 120 air quality standards that need to be upgraded, these penalties mean absolutely nothing. It is window dressing; it is whitewashing; it is simply an abdication of responsibility by your ministry, by your government, by your Premier. The people of Ontario are not going to be fooled.

We are now looking at deregulation of hazardous waste. Again, you talk about dump sites; you talk about hazardous waste; you talk about cracking down on illegal dumping. Do you know how many convictions you had in 1998 for tire dumps in the whole province? Ten. You had 10 convictions in 1998. That's it. What are you cracking down on? You don't have the staff or the regulations to go after illegal tire dumps. You've had 10 convictions for the whole province. On the site of the 1997 Brantford tire fire, there were eight violations, no operating licence, a court order to stop operations, and your ministry still took no action. And you knew about that. What about the hundreds and thousands you don't know about and you don't have the mechanism to find out about?

You talk about landfill sites and dumps and hazardous waste. You have regulations proposed that would dereg-

ulate a huge number of products that in the past were treated as hazardous waste and had to be treated as such and disposed of as such. You're looking at the deregulation of PCBs, storage and transportation of PCBs. Again, you've got these tough penalties, but on the other hand you're now moving to take away the standards and regulations to deal with PCBs. Your own Minister of the Environment stated a few months ago that it was acceptable to dump oil down the sewer, that it was OK. Norm Sterling said that it was fine; again, deregulating something that had been treated as hazardous waste. The list goes on and on.

Landfill sites: We saw the report about the potential problems at some of the landfill sites in the Toronto area a few days ago. What's your minister's response? "Everything's fine. Don't worry. Be happy. It's below the levels; it's below the standards." These standards haven't been updated in 20 years.

Environmental protection changes as we learn of new dangers, as scientific and medical information tells us of new chemicals and new dangers to health in regard to the environment.

Yes, regulations change, and the issues that government maybe had to deal with 10 years ago or five years ago are not the same as today, because we didn't have the information we have today. But once we have that information and we make the link, a clear, definite scientific and medical link between health and the environment, then it is unethical, immoral and irresponsible of government not to act and not to do its job of protecting the health of Ontarians, and that's exactly what you're doing.

The minister's response to the issue of the landfill sites: "Everything's fine. I'm not concerned." We asked in the House for his ministry to undertake air quality testing at every single dump across this province. What was the minister's response? "It's the responsibility of the municipalities, and if they let us know there is a problem, maybe we'll look at it." That is not leadership; that is not responsibility. It is not the job of the minister to act with such callous disregard, in an irresponsible manner, but that's what we're seeing here.

This government likes to hold Drive Clean as one of its achievements, if it ever gets off the ground. I can tell you that we have on record at least 45 occasions either in Hansard or in the media of one of two ministers, whether it was Minister Elliott before she got dumped or Minister Sterling, committing to Drive Clean. It was going to start in 1997, then it was delayed six months. It was going to start in 1998, then it was going to start at the end of 1998, and now we're talking about the beginning of 1999. This government can't even get it right. There are 38 jurisdictions across North America that have that program in place. You can't figure out how to run this program and now you've gone back to the original concept of simply having hundreds of thousands of outlets across the province doing this, because you can't figure out how to do it any other way. By the time you put in this program, what you're doing now is outdated.

There are better ways, which you refuse to look at. The state of Colorado is looking at technology now that would simply require cars under a certain year to be brought in to be tested. They would have roadside equipment that would be able to tell you which cars are a problem, that would be able to monitor that and enforce that by sending letters. Those are the types of technology that are available. Again, you're driven to just do something because you've screwed up so badly for three and a half years that by the time you get it in place, the program you have is outdated, but you hold this as your major achievement. It's taken two and a half years to get a simple program off the ground — this is not rocket science; this is not reinventing the wheel; it has worked in BC and in 37 American states — but it's taken three and a half years to figure out and you still haven't figured it out.

Now you go ahead and spend hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars, by the time it's over, on advertising a program that's not off the ground yet. You've got the cute little cartoon characters, cars, on TV every night, you've got newspaper ads, you've got your radio ads, advertising Drive Clean. Your whole budget for this program until it gets off the ground is \$2 million. That's before you test the first car. It's simply to advertise this program: \$2 million and you don't test one car.

2010

You pride yourself on running government like a business. If this minister were a CEO of any corporation in this province, he would have been fired long ago. It is sheer mismanagement, sheer incompetence. We have seen this time and time again, and now you want us to believe that somehow this bill, a bill that the member for Algoma introduced two years ago, which took you two years to figure out, write in your own words and bring forward —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): They even copied my words.

Mr Agostino: Why didn't you do it two years ago, when the bill was brought in? I guess it wasn't close enough to an election.

Now you want us to believe that somehow this bill is going to change all this, that somehow people are going to forget the three and a half years of environmental mismanagement and dismantling that has occurred under your jurisdiction. Well, it ain't gonna fly. It is not going to fly. People are not going to buy it. Ontarians are not going to believe you.

Why is this bill here now? I'll tell you why it's here: because the whiz kids in the Premier's office are starting to panic. They've realized that environment and environmental protection will be the sleeping giants in the next election. We know we're going to deal with health care and education and you know you're going to get wiped off the map on those issues, but now you're realizing that environmental protection is suddenly going to be important. The polls are telling you that; Ontarians are telling you that. So you rush out and you dust off an old piece of legislation, or a bill that had been introduced two years previously, and you bring that forward and say: "Hey, here's what we've done. We're going to have the

toughest standards in the world, the toughest penalties in the world." Hogwash. Nobody will believe you. No pleading on the way to the election, no conversion on the road to the election is going to get you off the hook on this one. You can bring in any bill you want; it ain't going to fly. No one will believe you. You have no credibility left. Your Premier has not an ounce of credibility when it comes to environmental protection, and frankly, your Minister of the Environment doesn't even register any longer when it comes to environmental protection.

Very clearly, this bill is a sick joke on Ontarians. It does not address the real issues. It does nothing for environmental protection. It is clearly brought in as a last-minute, desperate attempt by a government that has failed miserably in not only protecting the environment but, more important, protecting the health of Ontarians through dismantling environmental protection.

Mr Bradley: I want to say that this bill is better than a kick in the shins, and that's about as much praise as I'll put forward. It's a bill that I'm going to support because, if you had a choice of getting a kick in the shins or not getting a kick in the shins, you'd say this is better than a kick in the shins.

It is indeed, as the member for Hamilton East has described it, a deathbed repentance or an attempt at a deathbed repentance. I lament for the Ministry of the Environment, which had become a very vital and important and strong ministry within government, being — I don't know if in 1998 you still use the word "emasculated" — emasculated by this particular government and its powers largely taken away, its authority taken away. It gets elbowed aside now by others, including pseudo-commissions that are out there.

My lament is for the Minister of the Environment, my good friend Norm Sterling, who I think probably wants to do a good job. Many will be critical of him. The critic for the Liberal Party was critical of the minister and I understand that. Critics will train their eyesight on the minister. I want to say that there's a bigger picture. My criticism is not of the minister. He simply has —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I know who controls the puppet strings. They're controlled in the Premier's office.

Mr Wildman: In other words, he's a puppet.

Mr Bradley: The poor minister is left to answer questions in the House. He's left to defend the position of the government on the environment.

Now we have the Premier attacking the Minister of the Environment publicly over a program, when everybody knows it's not the Minister of the Environment dragging his feet; it's the Premier's office dragging their feet because they're getting some noise from their big business friends who did not want to see that program brought in. The easiest thing to do: Just as the Premier blamed the Minister of Health when the emergency funding wasn't flowing to the hospitals after it had been promised in the spring and it still wasn't flowing in the fall, he pointed the finger at Elizabeth Witmer and said, "You're to blame and I'm going to do something about this." he did the

same thing to the member for Carleton. I knew he was not guilty. I know where the blame rested, and it's in the Premier's office.

I was hoping, as I said in some of my earlier remarks, that this bill would encompass the Niagara Escarpment Commission. The story behind the Niagara Escarpment Commission is that some of the mad dogs — that's a word we use but we really don't mean it that literally — who hated the Ministry of the Environment and who sit in the government caucus, some of those people said: "We've got to straighten out this Niagara Escarpment Commission. We've got to get some severances on that escarpment for our buddies." Mr Sterling, the Minister of the Environment, had responsibility for the Niagara Escarpment Commission. That happened under the Peterson government. It was taken away from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, where it didn't belong, in my view, and was assigned to the Ministry of Environment, because the Niagara Escarpment plan and the Niagara Escarpment Commission is all about protecting a real gem. The member for Dufferin-Peel knows that. He understands that. Some of his colleagues don't, they want to see development all over the Niagara Escarpment, but the member for Dufferin-Peel understands that and the Minister of the Environment understands that. So what happened? Mike Harris took that away from Mr Sterling and from the Ministry of the Environment.

There are two problems with that. The first is that he takes it away from the ministry of the Environment and gives it to the Ministry of the exploitation of natural resources. That's what that ministry is all about. Their clients are those who exploit natural resources. That ministry, MNR, is annihilated by government cuts — budget cuts and staff cuts as well. The Ministry of Natural Resources has been cut.

They took the one person, outside of David Tilson, on the government side who I think would have protected the Niagara Escarpment out of that position and gave it to the Ministry of Natural Resources. You knew that the appointments would come in and the good old boys, the friends of Bill Murdoch, would be put on the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the skyscrapers would be the limit.

There are a number of people, regardless of their political affiliation, who understand that the Niagara Escarpment is a gem. It has been declared by the United Nations as a very special area, a biosphere. It should be protected. If you want to put the Hilton in downtown Toronto, put it in downtown Toronto. I'd love to see development in our major cities within the confines of the urban areas of major cities. If you want to say I'm pro-development there, I sure am. I want to see lots of that going on within the confines of the urban boundaries of our major cities. That's exactly where it should take place, the urban renewal that takes place, the vitality that takes place. But you don't plunk it down on the Niagara Escarpment.

There's one decision that's been made, and of course when you change Environmental Assessment Board

makeup and when you change the Niagara Escarpment Commission makeup, you're going to get people, if you are pro-development, who are going to start approving these projects, and you're going to have helter-skelter development all over the escarpment and you're going to ruin it. You can't go up there and tear down the Hilton or tear down the Holiday Inn or tear that golf course out of the middle of the escarpment. The Minister of the Environment loves golf, but I'm sure he doesn't want to see golf courses plunked down in the middle of the Niagara Escarpment.

What you had was the Premier taking that responsibility away (a) from the Ministry of the Environment, and (b) from the only person in cabinet who seemed to care about protecting the escarpment. That really showed the commitment of Mike Harris and his minions to the environment and to environmental protection.

The Ontario Medical Association has expressed its concern about how much inactivity we've seen on the part of the Harris government in the environment. The Provincial Auditor has been justifiably critical of the Harris government for what has happened. The Environmental Commissioner has seen many deficiencies within the ministry. The David Suzuki Foundation has commented adversely.

Is this the fault of the Minister of the Environment alone? Absolutely not. If you don't give the minister the resources, if you're cutting the ministry staff by 36% and the ministry budget by 42%, you can't expect the minister to be able to carry out his responsibilities as he or she has in the past.

The government can pass all the legislation it wants. If the ministry doesn't have the staff, doesn't have the equipment, doesn't have the resources and doesn't have the clout, it can't function as it should to protect the environment for the people of this province.

Who wants it protected? The general population wants the environment protected. But there's another group that everybody forgets, and that is those who are responsible business people, the people who have already spent the dollars on training staff, on putting in new equipment for abatement purposes, on changing processes so that they do not create contaminants in the first place, and who have set a code which must be followed by their company; in other words, good environmental actors, if I can put it in those terms. They are annoyed when they see other companies or competitors who want to break those laws, who want to cut the corners, who want the regulations eased, who want the legislation changed, because they have adapted to it. They've said, "We're prepared to be good corporate citizens, and the heck with those other people who want to break the laws."

2020

Unfortunately, they had the ear of some members of the government. The so-called Red Tape Commission was set up. It's about as credible as the — what do you call those, the police commission? No. What is it they call it?

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Crime commissioners.

Mr Bradley: The crime commissioners. It's to give backbenchers a job to do.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): Be nice. It's Christmas.

Mr Bradley: I'm not being critical of the people; I'm being critical of setting these things up. You had the Red Tape Commission, and the chair, my good friend from Lincoln, could never be accused of being a raving environmentalist. We would never accuse my friend of that. In fact, according to Martin Mittelstaedt of the Globe and Mail, in an article, he'd written, letters to the minister saying "Don't prosecute these people, because my Red Tape Commission is changing the rules so that what they're doing will be legal." It used to be illegal.

If you're going to set up a Red Tape Commission which is going to undermine the Minister of the Environment, how can you expect the Minister of the Environment to do his job properly, even if he wanted to? Our Minister of the Environment is both a lawyer and an engineer, so he could have the potential to be a good Minister of the Environment, but he can't be as long as they won't give him the tools to be able to carry out his job properly. That's what has happened with this Minister of the Environment: He hasn't been given the tools.

I'm told that the compliance and enforcement branch — the minister always nods no, but I'm told this so I believe it — has been reduced from 97 to 70 in the last three years. You can have all the laws you want; if you don't have the staff to enforce them and if they don't have the authority to enforce them and you've got the Red Tape Commission looking over their shoulder every time —

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): You sound like a broken record, Jim. You've never had an original idea in your life.

Mr Bradley: — and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale being opposed to anything you want to do in the environment, then of course you're going to have a difficult time. I hear noises emanating from the back row which tell me — he's doing something very nice right now; I won't say what it is, he's doing something very charitable now, but he's interjecting at the same time.

The member for Dufferin-Peel I suspect is agreeing with most of what I'm saying. He's either nodding in agreement or nodding off at my speech, one of the two. I can't figure out what it is.

I don't feel angry with the Minister of the Environment; I feel sorry for the Minister of the Environment because of what Mike Harris and the gang in the backrooms are doing in the field of the environment. I hope he wins the battle in cabinet when it comes down because all these decisions of significance have to come to the cabinet. I am confident that Norm Sterling — if I can use his name, because I've known him a long time — will be fighting the battle against development on the escarpment which will set a precedent, and there are those cases coming before the cabinet in the near future.

One thing the government is prepared to spend money on — I'll give them credit, if I can say "credit" in this case — one thing I will say is that they know how to

spend on advertising. They are advertising like it's going out of style. I am waiting for the Taxpayers Coalition — I remember my good friend from Lincoln used to be the president. Was he the Ontario president, Tim, at one time of the Taxpayers Coalition? I'm expecting them to come out and say, "Mike Harris, why are you squandering over \$50 million on government advertising —"

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): It's growing.

Mr Bradley: "— picking the pockets of the people of this province to glorify the Premier?" I'm expecting any time that the Taxpayers Coalition is going to do that.

The member for Nepean must know the Reform Party people, so he must know —

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): He must know something.

Mr Bradley: The member for Mississauga South is not a Reformer, she's a Conservative, but the member for Nepean perhaps could put a word in the ear of Stephen Harper, head of the National Citizens' Coalition, and tell him about Mike Harris's squandering of millions upon millions of dollars on self-serving, blatant political propaganda.

Would I ever like to see that money spent in the Ministry of the Environment to give this minister the resources to carry out his responsibilities. Can you imagine what this minister could do in terms of making his legislation effective, bringing about compliance, with the \$50 million that Mike Harris is squandering now on self-serving, blatantly political advertising? He could do an awful lot, just as he could probably, and you would know this, Mr Speaker, keep the Hotel Dieu Hospital open in St Catharines.

The member for Mississauga South is holding up something over there. She was a good critic on the environment. She must be totally beside herself when she sees the environment record of this government. By the way, I want to give her credit. She was being chauffeured by Hazel McCallion on the weekend. I want to congratulate Hazel on 20 years as mayor of Mississauga. In fact, I think it's this very night that Hazel McCallion is celebrating her 20th year as mayor. I want to extend my congratulations to Hazel, because I know she has been suitably critical of this government when it was necessary.

Hon Mrs Marland: She was critical of your government when it was necessary.

Mr Bradley: Hazel calls them as she sees them, and I'm happy to see that.

I want to say that the reduction in inspection and enforcement staff has resulted in a drop in charges against polluters; 683 charges were laid against polluters in the first 10 months of 1996 compared to 1,037 in all of 1995, a 21% reduction. Fines have dropped by 57%. In the area of tough environmental standards, in the 1996 auditor's report the auditor criticized the Ministry of the Environment because 226 air-quality standards that were identified as needing to be updated back in 1992 had not yet been updated. In 1998, the auditor found not one air-quality standard had been updated. But there would be no

point in updating the standards if you don't have anybody there to enforce those standards.

Everybody thinks that only the Minister of the Environment is in charge of protecting the environment. If the government wants to protect the environment, it would also ensure that it continued to participate financially in the provision of public transportation, because a lot of what the minister may want to accomplish in the field of clean air could be accomplished if this government would continue to be an important partner in the provision of public transportation, instead of running from the scene.

The government can't be found any more. It used to provide 75% of the capital costs. In other words, if you were buying a bus for your municipality, 75% was paid by the provincial government, and the operating costs were shared generously by the provincial government. That's the provincial government's role. If you want to truly be a government that's going to clean up the air, you have to put the funds, the investment, into public transportation.

I know that in cabinet meetings the Minister of the Environment probably pleads with his colleagues to do so, but those pleas have certainly not been listened to by the backroom boys in the Harris administration. I suspect my friend Bob Runciman, who's here tonight, has supported Norm in these matters, but of course they can't all be quite that successful.

I want to say as well that the Ministry of Natural Resources enforcement staff has been cut drastically. I had a person who used to work for the Ministry of Natural Resources in my office about five or six months ago. I would say he's from a Tory family. Certainly I knew the family as always being Conservative supporters. This person had been turfed out the door by the Harris government because he was involved in enforcement. He did not have a very good opinion, and this is a long-time Conservative family, of this particular government. But I explained to him and said, "Look, don't be ashamed of the Progressive Conservative Party because they're not in power at Queen's Park; it's the Reform-a-Tories that are in power there." He felt somewhat better when he left the constituency office, knowing that it wasn't the party of Bob Welch and Tom Wells and Larry Grossman and Bill Davis, but instead the Reform-a-Tories that we see now.

2030

Mr Hastings: Do you listen to Fibber McGee and Molly?

Mr Bradley: The member dates himself when he talks about Fibber McGee and Molly over there. Actually, I thought the member was about 35 years old. He talks about Fibber McGee and Molly. I think I read about them somewhere but I don't know too much about them myself.

I think there's a danger in the very attitude this government has towards the environment. There are just too many people in the government who didn't like the Ministry of the Environment, never liked it, and said, as George Wallace in the US used to refer to them, "those pointy-headed, pinko professors." That's what they seemed to think the environmentalists were, and they are the people who stand up to protect the environment.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Spiro Agnew.

Mr Bradley: Spiro Agnew had another one I can't pronounce, too many Ns in it. "Nabobs of negativism," I think he said in that particular case.

Mr Wildman: Nattering nabobs of negativism.

Mr Bradley: That's right. Thank you.

Lands for Life: We have a situation where this government appears to be turning over the largest portion of this province to the lumber barons and the mining barons. They seem to want to say that we have these lovely forests here — we always talk about saving them in Brazil and Costa Rica and places like that, but in Ontario they seem to want to turn the whole province over to the lumber barons and the mining barons of this province. I get concerned about this. People in my constituency and in Etobicoke-Rexdale are worried when they hear this happening in this province and they want to see an end put to that giveaway of the lands to those who would exploit rather than protect our natural resources.

It was mentioned that the Minister of the Environment said at one time, and he will nod yes or no, that it was going to be OK to pour oil down the drain.

Hon Mr Sterling: No.

Mr Bradley: He says no and I have to take his word for it. It must have been the Premier's office that was saying that. It couldn't have been the minister. I knew it couldn't have been the minister.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: OK, I don't want to say anything that's not true. The minister knows I would never say anything that's not true about what he had said and I take his word when he denies emphatically that he said we should pour oil down the drains. I believe him. I take his word when he says that.

Another saying in the Ministry of the Environment, probably before you got there, Norm, was, "You are to be business-friendly." I'll tell you something: That sends a pretty ominous message to people in the Ministry of the Environment, when they're told to be business-friendly.

Mr Hastings: You were anti-business.

Mr Bradley: I was was not anti-business but anti-polluter, because as I explained previously in my remarks, there were many good corporate citizens who insisted that we apply the law in the most severe fashion to those who would violate the laws of this province environmentally. The good corporate citizens said that, not the people who came to the good old boys and the Tory backbenches and said: "The Ministry of the Environment are crazy there. You've got to change them there rules." No, sir. The good people in the corporate sector, who wanted to see the laws of this province enforced, said: "Please, Minister of the Environment, enforce them. They should be tough but they should be fair."

That's why I get worried when I hear the Red Tape Commission is poking its nose into the Ministry of the Environment and trying to supersede the minister and the Ministry of the Environment with these new rules and regulations.

I was reading today — you have to find some humour somewhere, Mr Speaker, in this House — something that said, "Ontario Ministry of the Environment key initiatives," and I was amused with this because many of the initiatives it mentioned were in fact backward steps in the environment. They gutted the environmental assessment process in this province. Now they say it's more efficient. More efficient means it's less onerous on those who want to propose a development. They have to go through fewer steps. There are fewer ministries commenting on it and as a result the chances of something bad happening in the environment are increased drastically.

It says, "We have introduced a more effective approvals process, including standardized approvals." I know what that means. A nod and a wink and away it goes, and that's not good. I know the other one was onerous, but I'll tell you, the member for Mississauga South, when she was the critic, would settle for nothing less. She was right on that occasion, and when she's in the cabinet meetings I hope she puts that point forward on the environment that she used to put forward when she sat on this side of the House. I am confident she would do that. I just wish they would listen to her, if indeed that is what she is doing.

I looked at the so-called accomplishments and most of them were backward steps. It says, "We turned over the responsibility for water and sewers to the municipalities," as if somehow that was an advancement, because we know many of them are going to have to privatize their systems. It could be like Britain, where it has been a disaster. Under Maggie Thatcher it was a disaster. Many of the people from Britain phone me and tell me what a disaster it has been. My relatives over there make sure they do that.

Another area I want to look at is agricultural lands. The Ministry of Agriculture must know this. There is a new problem that's emerging. It has been there for a while, but it seems to contract and expand. That's urban sprawl and the turning of valuable agricultural land into development.

There are many areas in the province which can be developed: (a) you don't have the climatic conditions, or (b) you don't have the soil conditions.

But I look at the Niagara Peninsula — and the minister visits many times. He comes down to see my good friends Betsy and Peter Partington of St Catharines. Peter is the former member of the Ontario Legislature for St Catharines-Brock and, I might add, the chair of the finance committee of the Niagara region that criticized Mike Harris and the provincial government for downloading. That's just an aside. He comes to visit the Niagara Peninsula, and I think what attracts the Minister of the Environment and others from major urban centres are the large tracts of rural land. I think they would like to see that land preserved, yet day after day we see the pressures being placed on municipalities to expand their borders.

What I would like to see is an effort to have the downtown areas developed and redeveloped. In some communities which have deteriorated over the years, they would love to see the downtown areas redeveloped, but of

course, as the minister would know — this is again where the Minister of the Environment needs help — with the new property tax bill they're bringing in, the big bank towers in downtown Toronto and the big box stores you usually see on the highways have got a tax break. Mike Harris has shuffled the deck and he sent out aces to them, and the poor small business people, many of whom are in the downtown areas, have had deuces dealt to them.

I'm saying that it takes a whole government's attitude, and I think this minister is entrapped in a government which not only wants to ignore the environment but has many members who are actively anti-environment, who are there to debunk what environmentalists will say about environmental issues out there. I hope he will speak out against this constant desire on the part of major developers to get their hands on some of the best agricultural lands, soil-wise and climate-wise, in this province and pave it over. I know that what you have to do to preserve that land is make farming viable. There are only two ways to do that: You either pay the price for the product or you provide assistance so they can continue to farm in an appropriate fashion. That's what I want to see happen.

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With this bill, I go back to say as I did when I started out, it's better than a kick in the shins. I'm going to vote for the bill, because anything that's an improvement, even a baby step that is taken by this government in the field of the environment, is better than nothing. It may be just a chicken bone that the Premier has given to the Minister of the Environment allowing this legislation — the Wildman bill, as I call it — to pass in this House, but at least it's something.

I want to make Norm Sterling's evening by saying here's somebody in this House who has sympathy for the predicament in which he has been placed by Premier Mike Harris and who will continue to fight for the necessary staff, the necessary funding, the necessary resources and the necessary clout for the Minister of the Environment to carry out his responsibilities as I know in his heart of hearts he would wish to carry them out. I will vote in favour of this bill, as tiny a step as it might be, small improvement that it might be, and I will continue my fight, shoulder to shoulder with the Minister of the Environment, to secure the authority he needs to carry out his responsibilities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr Wildman: I listened with interest to the comments of my colleagues from Hamilton East and St Catharines, and I must say that while I appreciated their giving credit where credit may or may not be due, I also was concerned with the harsh criticism, frankly, of the member for Hamilton East where he basically said this means absolutely nothing. I certainly hope that's not the case.

I understand why he said that. I understand his concern about the cuts to the Ministry of the Environment, that when we've got about 42% fewer staff, it's going to be very difficult to enforce new regulations, and it doesn't really do a great deal of good to have regulations if they

are not enforced, if there isn't the investigative staff and if there isn't the enforcement staff available to carry out the investigations, lay the charges, take the actions and take the polluters to court.

It's worse to pass legislation increasing enforcement mechanisms if the law is not enforced, because that then makes the law a mockery. People will be able to flout the law, and it's worse than if you didn't have the law. It's not good for law enforcement to have that kind of attitude grow about the law. If the law is simply something written on paper and it doesn't really mean anything in terms of stopping illegal haulers and people who carry out illegal operations in dumps, then it would be worse than if we hadn't gone ahead with it.

I am concerned about what has happened to the Ministry of Natural Resources as well as the Ministry of the Environment in terms of cuts to their budgets and their staffs. If this government carries out the threat, as it says it will, to have even more cuts, then enforcement will be even more difficult.

Hon Mrs Marland: It's really a pleasure to follow my two favourite opposition former ministers of the environment. The current Minister of the Environment and his predecessor, Brenda Elliott, the Minister of the Environment before Mr Norm Sterling, are the best ministers of the environment we have had in this province, but before that, the only ministers of the environment I have known are the member for St Catharines and the member for Algoma.

Since I'm responding to the comments of the member for St Catharines, it's very interesting, I must say, Jimmy, to say to you — the member for St Catharines, I say to the Speaker — do we remember the momentum that the Liberal government gave to the incineration of PCBs at St Lawrence Cement in my riding, and do we remember when you were Minister of the Environment and every two or three months when I was pressing you to bring out new air emission standards for this province, you were never able to convince your cabinet to do that, or do you remember the Hagersville tire fire, as a result of which the Liberal government introduced the tire tax, \$5 per tire for disposing of tires, and never spent a single penny of that money collected for disposal of tires on a new environmental protection system for disposing safely of tires?

Mr Gravelle: I want to compliment the member for Hamilton East and the member for St Catharines in their remarks in responding to Bill 82. I think it would behoove the government well to listen to what the member for Hamilton East is saying, as the critic who has followed this so incredibly closely and knows really that what we're seeing here perhaps is a government, yes, putting forward a bill that indeed, as the member for St Catharines says, is better than a kick in the shins or, as my father would say, better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick. But what makes one suspicious and concerned is, you have a piece of legislation that is, as it's written, certainly a step forward, but in terms of the ability for it to be enforced, it's extremely questionable that anything can happen to make it worthwhile.

What one is left with is a concern that this is somewhat like a conversion on the road to Damascus. We're now approaching a certain time in the life of this government. They put forward a piece of legislation that they will then say: "Look, we're very concerned. We put forward this bill. It's a bill that will go a long way towards environmental protection." It's something they'll trot out in their campaign and say, "This is what we stand for," when the fact is that it may be virtually unenforceable. It's a very great concern that we have, and I think the fact is too that the people of this province will see that.

We've watched this government for the last three years dismantle its ministry staff, dismantle its compliance and enforcement branch. No matter what the minister says, those are simply the facts in terms of the numbers of people who are no longer there. They're no longer there. We know that the number of offences that people have been charged with has gone down remarkably as well.

People are very concerned about that. No matter what the minister says, people are concerned about that. There's a cut in the ability to enforce. There's a bill put forward that, yes, on the surface appears to be a bill that is a step in the right direction. But if it cannot be enforced and ends up only being a political tool, one that you can trot out and say, "This is what we believe we can do if you re-elect us," then people are going to be very cynical. Certainly we're going to make sure we watch it closely.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): It's interesting this evening because we have the current Minister of the Environment and two former ministers of the environment commenting on this bill. If I had my pick, I would pick Bud Wildman as my best Minister of the Environment. That's not just because I was his parliamentary assistant, it is because during the deepest, darkest days of the recession between 1990 and 1993, the NDP government brought in some of the most progressive environmental legislation this province has ever known, that is, the Environmental Bill of Rights.

This government has done nothing but undermine that legislation since it got elected in 1995. Even though the member for St Catharines talks about how there's no point to upgrading standards without enforcement, and I agree with that, I think he has to acknowledge some of the failings of the federal Liberal government as well because they too have an environmental commissioner now, Brian Emmett. He came out with a very scathing report that talked about the federal Liberal record on environmental protection. He said they neglected to set clear and measurable targets, establish implementation plans or define roles for provinces and industry after signing on to environmental accords. This really puts the agreement that was made in 1992 in Rio in jeopardy. He says as well, "What really concerns me is that far too often the government is not keeping the promises it makes both to Canadians and to the world." That's the federal Liberal record.

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Mr Agostino: I want to thank my colleague from St Catharines for spending the time and also the response

from the members for Algoma, Mississauga South, Port Arthur and Windsor-Riverside. Again, I want to congratulate the member for Algoma for introducing this bill and, finally, the minister, two years later, for dusting it off and realizing that it should be brought into legislation.

Very clearly, when you look at this on its own, in isolation, it's motherhood and apple pie. How can you disagree with what is there? But you look at the bill in the context of the whole track record. You look at the bill in the context of the diminishing of the standards. You look at the bill in the context of the Provincial Auditor telling the minister, "You've got 120 regulations that need upgrading," and you haven't. Some 80 or 90 regulations that were in place were gutted by the minister, under his watch. At the end of the day, the two cannot coexist. You need the two for this to work.

This is a cynical election ploy to be able to stand up during the campaign and say: "You know what? We've done more with less." That's the minister's favourite statement: "We've done more with less." Well, you've done less with less, period. You have taken fines of almost \$2 million in 1995 for environmental polluters and they have dropped to \$850,000. Your charges have dropped; your prosecutions have dropped. Two things have happened. Either all of a sudden polluters totally cleaned up their act, or you've stopped enforcing the laws. The reality is, you've stopped enforcing the laws.

Minister, if you strengthened the standards, brought back the regulations you eliminated, we'd give you some credit for those types of changes. But this is nothing more than a cynical election ploy to try to get you over the hump and to try to mask over what has been a dismal record by your government in regard to protecting our health and our environment in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wildman: At the outset I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to defer the leadoff by our environment critic until a later time.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: How much time are you asking for your critic to defer?

Mr Wildman: An hour.

Hon Mr Sterling: The full hour?

Mr Wildman: Yes.

Hon Mr Sterling: Then it's our turn to speak.

Mr Wildman: No, I was going to speak for 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma, you've got 20 minutes.

Mr Wildman: Thank you. I guess I have unanimous consent. The reason I had to ask for unanimous consent was because our environment critic, the member for Riverdale, is acting as an elf and helping Santa this evening so she was not able to participate in the debate. Actually, I didn't think he should be dressed as Santa; I thought he should be dressed as the Grinch who stole Etobicoke Centre.

I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I want to point out to the member for Mississauga South that there was

indeed another Minister of the Environment between 1990 and 1993. That was my friend the former member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Ruth Grier, who did a tremendous job. I want to pay tribute to her as my predecessor in that portfolio.

I must say that I'm of two minds about this legislation. Obviously, I'm pleased that the government has had a conversion on the road to the election. The minister has been blinded by the light of desire to finally come to grips with environmental polluters. He has decided to bring in legislation that will in fact increase the penalties and make it less attractive to treat fines as the cost of doing business. In that sense, I'm happy that the government has finally decided to bring this kind of legislation forward.

But I'm also a little bit worried that this government will not have the staff available that is required to do proper enforcement. As I said a few moments ago, we then run the risk of having the law flouted by polluters who will then not feel that laws and regulations mean anything, because the government doesn't have the staff required to do the enforcement and to ensure that this stiffer law is in fact implemented.

When I say I am of two minds, I also frankly believe that plagiarism is the highest form of flattery. When the minister introduces a bill which is very similar and in some cases in some parts of the bill word for word the same as the bill I introduced, Bill 24, in 1995, which was debated in May 1996 and passed unanimously by this House, then I should be pleased, and I am. The government has decided to move forward on a piece of legislation that was brought forward in this House, debated by members from all sides and supported by members on all sides of the House.

I want to pay tribute to the MPP for Dufferin-Peel, who I think was instrumental during that debate in May 1996. He persuaded members of his caucus to support the bill rather than to vote against the legislation, because I think the member for Scarborough-Canadian Tire was in fact interested in voting against the bill during that debate and he was persuaded by the member for Dufferin-Peel. So I'm pleased.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: The minister says it's sometimes called plagiarism to copy research. That's what I said, it's the highest form of flattery. I would just say that if that research was copied, that research was initiated by myself when I was in another role.

The reason I introduced the private member's bill was to enable the Ministry of the Environment to crack down on offenders who continued to ignore Ontario's environmental protection laws, especially those who dump waste illegally across the province. I brought in legislation which would strengthen the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act.

The purpose of the legislation we have before us tonight and my private member's bill was to give the ministry tools to combat illegal practices of fast-buck artists who continue to dump on other people's properties and treat the current fines simply as the cost of doing

business. Illegal waste haulers and dump operators are costing Ontario residents and property owners and legitimate waste management companies millions of dollars in cleanup costs and lost business. Their activities are undermining our province's attempt to limit the amount of waste going into landfill through our 3Rs program to reduce, reuse or recycle waste products and materials in Ontario.

The legislation that I brought forward and the bill that is before us tonight will reinforce Ontario's commitment to the 3Rs and level the playing field by ensuring that everyone in the waste management business will have to respect provincial environmental protection regulations. I think that's important, because as the former Minister of Industry and Trade, the member for Eglinton, pointed out, it is quite unfair for legitimate businesses to have to compete with those that are prepared to cut corners, break regulations and break the law to be able to charge less for their business. It's quite unfair and it makes the legitimate operators less competitive.

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During the time of the NDP government, in July 1993 the government initiated a crackdown on illegal waste companies. The Ministry of the Environment set up a special task force which launched a series of investigations of every waste management company in the greater Toronto area. A RIDE-like inspection program for trucks hauling waste in the region was initiated. By the end of 1994, the ministry had laid 500 charges and issued over 15 orders to close down and clean up illegal dump sites, but some illegal operators continued to defy the provincial laws and regulations.

The legislation I brought forward that is now before the House under the minister's aegis would make it possible for the Ministry of the Environment enforcement branch to shut down these kinds of operators immediately, to seize licence plates, vehicle permits and equipment and to issue on-site stop-work and cleanup orders. Obviously, Ontario should not be a haven for environmental criminals.

Under the current law, the Ministry of the Environment cannot take effective action to clean up an illegal dump site. The ministry can only require the property owner or the previous owner, who may not have been a party to the illegal waste dumping, to clean up the site. In other words, if a farmer owns a piece of property and an illegal hauler comes along and dumps waste on his back 40 without the knowledge of the property owner, and then that illegal dump is subsequently discovered, under the current law the ministry would have to order the property owner to clean it up. If at some point the ministry discovered who had dumped the waste there illegally, there is no provision for giving restitution to the property owner and giving him the opportunity to recover the costs of the cleanup. Under this legislation that would be rectified because the courts could order restitution to the property owner for the cleanup costs.

The bill that I introduced would enable the Ministry of the Environment to order a company or a person who has dumped waste on land or in a building which has not been

approved as a waste disposal or storage site to clean it up. In cases where the property owner has cleaned up illegally dumped waste, the ministry could order those responsible for dumping the waste to pay the cleanup costs of the property owner.

Also, both this bill and the bill that I introduced would significantly increase penalties upon conviction for offenders. The bill would increase the number of offences for which sentences to jail would be an option for judges to consider. I believe that this would be a powerful disincentive for polluters.

Mr Baird: Corporate.

Mr Wildman: Corporate polluters, exactly.

For too long we were able to prosecute the guy who was driving the truck, if he was caught, but not the person who had contracted with that truck driver to carry that waste and to dump it illegally, and this legislation hopefully will rectify that problem. I believe that these more serious penalties would demonstrate Ontario's determination to protect the environment from illegal waste haulers and landfill operators.

The experience of the Ministry of the Environment officials in the GTA in the period from mid-1993 to mid-1995 demonstrated that the Ministry of the Environment needs additional enforcement powers to protect our environment from illegal waste dumping and to ensure that those who flout provincial laws are stopped. The legislation that I introduced was an attempt to give the Ministry of the Environment those tools and to demonstrate Ontario's commitment to tough environmental law enforcement. Without that, the 3Rs program, which is strongly supported by most Ontarians, will continue to be undermined across the province.

In May 1996 the bill that I introduced to this House passed unanimously at second reading. That bill would have permitted the government to shut down law-breaking waste operations immediately and, as I said, to seize licence plates, vehicle permits and equipment and issue orders to stop work and begin cleanups. It would have brought in stiffer fines for polluters and would have required them to pay cleanup costs. That legislation would have levelled the playing field by ensuring that all waste management operators would have to respect provincial environmental protection regulation.

I was pleased in May 1996 that members from all three parties supported my bill to combat the illegal practices of the fast-buck artists who dump waste on other people's property. It's not often that members from all political parties in the Legislature agree on a piece of legislation. It's even more unusual when they agree to support an opposition member's bill and give it unanimous support in the Legislature. So I was very pleased. I must say I was not pleased when, after it passed unanimously in this Legislature, the bill languished in the committee and the government did not deign to bring it forward.

Mr Baird: Did you ever push that it be brought forward?

Mr Wildman: I certainly did. I argued with the House leader and said it should be brought forward. I talked to the House leader repeatedly about this.

Mr Baird: I was on the subcommittee and you never brought it forward. I would have said, "No problem, Bud."

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean.

Mr Wildman: When the House prorogued, of course the bill died. I reintroduced it as Bill 13 and it has been before the House since that time.

I'm glad the minister has decided to bring it forward, but I don't understand why his predecessor did not allow it to pass at that time so that it could have been in practice and implemented now. Could it be that it is now coming forward in November 1998 because we are headed towards the end of the mandate? The government feels vulnerable on environment because of the cuts to the Ministry of the Environment and the elimination of environmental protection regulations and it has decided to bring forward a bill that might be used to try and temper its image as being soft on polluters. Could that be? I hope that's not the only reason it has come forward. I hope it has come forward because the ministry is serious about getting tough with polluters, but that then raises some serious questions.

As I said, Bill 82, which is similar to my legislation and is in some cases even stronger — for instance, it allows enforcement operators to use flashing lights and so on — is a good move. But the real story is whether or not the ministry has been stripped of its enforcement, monitoring and inspection staff, and resources, to the extent that even with this legislation they won't be able to enforce the regulations that they have and implement this bill, Bill 82.

If the government had had the commitment to let the legislation I introduced pass, the people of Ontario would already have had tough environmental enforcement and the government would have been able to shut down law-breaking operations immediately, some of which have continued to operate for two years when they could have been shut down back in 1995 or 1996.

As I said, I'm happy to see that this government is finally taking an interest, finally listening to the concerns that we have raised consistently in this House about the need to strengthen environmental enforcement.

The government has slashed the Ministry of Environment. They've laid off 750 staff, when you look at the staff in the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources. They've cut the ministry budget by \$150 million since 1995. Overwhelmingly, despite what the minister has said, these cuts have been to environmental monitoring and enforcement. Prosecution and fines are down over 50% since 1995 because of the cuts to enforcement staff in the ministry by the Conservative government.

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Any environmental law is only as good as the staff and resources committed to enforcing it. This government has cut the enforcement staff. We know what staff are left in

the investigations branch of the ministry are just scrambling to keep up. One member says that maybe there have been fewer violations. Well, that's possible, but the ministry doesn't know because they don't have the staff to monitor, to know whether violations are up or down, because of the cuts to support staff in the investigations branch. Frankly, I don't believe the Ministry of Environment is able to do the job or is doing the job. I think what this government has done to the Ministry of Environment and to the Ministry of Natural Resources is very unfortunate.

The government has cut something in the neighbourhood of 13,000 jobs across the total government in the civil service. The Conservatives are now saying they're going to cut another 16,000 jobs. When you see the effects on the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources now, and the fact that those ministries essentially are empty shells of what they once were, what are further cuts going to mean for the ability of the staff to carry out their responsibilities, to monitor what's going on in the province, to investigate possible violations, to enforce the regulations and bring charges against polluters?

I'm very worried about this. I'm not saying this just in a partisan way. As someone who has been involved in the Ministry of Environment and, for that matter, the Ministry of Natural Resources, I'm very concerned about the ability of the staff of those ministries to do the job. So while I appreciate the fact that the minister has brought forward this legislation today for second reading debate, and the fact that it is so similar to the legislation that I brought forward and that was passed unanimously in this House in 1996, I'm very worried about what it will actually mean if the staff is not available to carry out their responsibilities and to implement the legislation.

What good is it to say that we'll be able to have stiffer fines, we'll be able to seize plates, we'll be able to seize equipment and trucks, that polluters may have to forfeit their equipment, polluters will have to make restitution, will have to clean up, if we're just saying that, if it just says it on a piece of paper, if it says it in a piece of legislation but we're not actually making it happen? It doesn't do any good to have stiffer penalties if you can't enforce, if you can't bring charges, if you can't prosecute in court and you can't ensure that polluters are found guilty of their crimes.

I welcome the legislation, but I challenge the minister, I challenge the government to put their money where these words are to ensure that there are adequate staff and funds and resources for the ministry to implement this legislation; to ensure that we stop illegal polluters, that we stop illegal dumpers; to ensure that these illegal haulers, these illegal operations, these fast-buck artists are stopped; to ensure that the disincentive in this law is a real disincentive because it's enforced. Then it will be fair to legitimate operators, legitimate businesses, and we will have protected our environment.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Minister.

Hon Mr Sterling: I want to thank the member for Algoma for participating in the debate, a debate which he deserves a very great right to be involved in.

I want to assure him that we can enforce these laws. I might say that under his government, when he was the minister, he had somewhere around 44 or 45 investigation officers in the investigations branch. There are now 44 investigation officers in that branch, at this day, right now. There has not been any drop with regard to number of investigation officers in the Ministry of the Environment. We were very careful when we were having to make the staff reductions, as a result of not having the kinds of resources that previous governments had. I can assure the member that in fact that has happened.

The difference between our government and the previous government is that we focus on results; they focused on process. They had a process for environmental assessment, for instance, that took many municipalities 10 or 12 years to get a landfill site. Now it takes something less than two years to go through that process. You might say the 12-year process was better. I don't agree. I think the two-year process is better.

The proof is in the pudding. The reports that are coming out now with regard to the environmental quality of our air and our water say that in spite of the climate change challenges we are facing, the air in Ontario is cleaner today than it was in 1994-95. The water is cleaner. The proof is in the pudding.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): The member for Algoma has done a great amount of work in terms of the environment and in terms of what I guess you would call the predecessor to Bill 82. I well remember him for his work in this area.

He stresses his comments a lot on staffing, in terms of who in the Ministry of the Environment will be out there to protect the environment. What we have seen in north-western Ontario is that staffing cuts, particularly in the Ministry of Natural Resources, have certainly led to a lack of enforcement and a lack of ensuring that the Ministry of Natural Resources is actually protecting the wildlife, protecting the species out there. We're hearing figures of great amounts of dollars coming out of the Ministry of the Environment, a great number of staff cuts. The minister has just indicated that no, he has the same staffing. We have heard figures of cuts of as much as 36%. The member for Algoma had other figures in terms of staffing. I think we'll have to watch very carefully as to what the future will bring.

When you hear comments such as the World Wildlife Fund giving Ontario an F in its efforts to protect ecologically significant areas of the province, when you hear things like that being put out by groups that know of what they speak, you become worried. You start thinking about budget cuts. You start thinking about staffing cuts. You start thinking about the future generations and what they're going to face. Yes, there are a good number of things to worry about when we hear of groups like this giving the government an F for their effort, when we hear of staffing cuts as the member has indicated, a real

genuine concern, not only for today but for the future in his province.

Mr Blain Morin: This bill is so significant in the community in which I reside and in my riding of Nickel Belt. I reside in a small community called Falconbridge, and that's home to Falconbridge nickel mines. I remember not so long ago when the snow would melt in the winter and one could walk outside and the snow banks were actually red from the sulphur emissions from Falconbridge nickel mines. Those emissions were from smelting nickel and ore, and one has to say, "Has it got better?" Certainly we're concerned.

In my riding, when we go up through areas like Chapleau, for example, and we start talking to the reeve of Chapleau, we hear about some of the environmental concerns they have around the mills. What we're saying here today is, the bill is a step in the right direction; there's no doubt about it. The member for Algoma and his insightful research into environmental issues certainly helped us get to the point we are at today. However, the real shortcoming here is what we're going to do about enforcement. We're really concerned because in northern Ontario, for example in my area of Sudbury — Rayside, Balfour, Nickel Belt, Lively — we have pumped millions and millions of dollars into the greening of our area. We need enforcement. The Premier of Ontario is saying another 13,000 public sector employees will be hitting the bricks. That was quoted in the *Toronto Star*. We are concerned. The issue here is about enforcement: Are we going to have the people to enforce this tough legislation?

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Mr Gravelle: I'm glad to have another opportunity to make some comments related to the remarks by the member for Algoma. I want to compliment him, as always, on his remarks and express once again the concerns we have that this legislation — while it is welcome because it is a reflection of a very great need and a reflection of legislation that needs to come forward, there are a number of concerns. One thinks back to some of the other remarks that have been made tonight in relation to the cuts that have taken place in the Ministry of Natural Resources, which are extraordinary cuts. Virtually one fifth of all the employees of the Ministry of Natural Resources were eliminated, which is causing extraordinary problems in terms of the work that the Ministry of Natural Resources should be doing and is supposed to be doing. One thinks in terms of conservation officers and some of the differences.

What it comes down to ultimately is that it is one thing to put together a piece of legislation that hopefully will increase environmental protection, that will do some of the jobs in terms of catching polluters that need to get done, but regardless of what the minister continues to say, the cuts to staff at the ministry are true and they are simply a fact, and the cuts to the budget of the ministry are true and are a fact, and they absolutely are going to have an extraordinary impact.

One wants to be hopeful. One wants to be pleased that indeed there's a piece of legislation that we will support, but one hopes that we don't end up being very cynical

about the process and seeing it only as being something that is there for the purposes of an election campaign that we all think is forthcoming soon so that they can say, "This is what we stand for," when for three and a half years we watched the government simply tear apart that ministry.

These are concerns that we have. We want to be able to support it. We want to be able to support it in the belief that indeed the enforcement is likely and possible. Our very strong feeling is that it will be very difficult to enforce these regulations the way the ministry has been left, and that being the case, we have some real difficulties.

Mr Wildman: I want to thank the Minister of the Environment and member for Carleton, the member for Kenora, the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Port Arthur for their remarks and comments.

I must say that despite what the minister says, the Provincial Auditor has made it clear that there are serious problems in the Ministry of the Environment because of the cuts and the inability of the ministry to carry out its mandate. The Provincial Auditor is not a partisan official. He's an individual who has the responsibility to look dispassionately and clearly at what is happening, and he has expressed concern about the Ministry of the Environment.

There have been other reports that have said that this jurisdiction, unfortunately — I regret very seriously — is one of the worst polluters in some areas in North America.

The member for Kenora points out that 30% of the staff at the ministry has been cut, so if we had difficulty meeting our mandate before, it is even more difficult now, despite what the minister says.

As the member for Nickel Belt said, this is a step in the right direction, and I want to sincerely congratulate the minister for bringing forward this legislation. I want to congratulate the staff of the ministry who have worked on this for many years in terms of the research, the drafting and the work that was done as a result of the initiative back in 1993 when we got tough on polluters and illegal dumpers in the GTA and found that new regulations and approaches were going to be needed for enforcement. I just reiterate, we've got to have the staff, we have to have the resources and we have to have the commitment to enforce this legislation or it would have been better not even to have passed it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I'm pleased to join in the debate this evening with my fellow members of the Legislature about the virtues of the proposed Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act. I believe it will be a great addition to the ability of the Ministry of the Environment to enforce the three major pieces of legislation it administers, the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act.

The legislation that protects Ontario's air, water and land is strong, and the ministry has worked to the best of its ability to ensure compliance with that legislation and to enforce it. Unfortunately, even the best efforts can come to

naught when your hands are tied. Such has been the situation facing the Ministry of the Environment in many cases.

Earlier in the debate, my colleague the member for Hastings-Peterborough mentioned to you several instances of how the ministry is prevented from working to its full potential when it comes to compliance and enforcement. One of the examples he used was the ability to seize plates and permits of vehicles that are suspected of being involved in offences against the environment. Ministry staff need the ability to seize plates to prevent offences from continuing or from happening in the first place.

The member for Eglinton also gave you a case example of an illegal waste operator who was able to continue his offences because he knew the ministry couldn't stop him. There are several proposals on the table with the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act that would help prevent such activity from continuing. The provisions for seizure, forfeiture and so on would have been effective tools to have had when the offences listed by Mr Sanderson occurred.

It's true that the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act gives the ministry increased authority and powers. One thing I'd like to stress is that we've gone to great lengths to ensure that these increased abilities are balanced by safeguards that ensure that everything we've proposed is in keeping with the Charter of Rights.

For example, there will be very high standards that must be met for obtaining court orders for the use of modern investigative aids such as electronic tracking devices and tracking substances. Ministry investigators will have to satisfy the court that they have reasonable grounds for believing that an offence is being committed or is about to take place.

We're not going to be running out and putting devices on every waste hauler in the province. That's not our intention. It would be unfair to the honest, law-abiding operators who follow the rules. Our intention is to be fair to the honest operators and to be tough on the dishonest ones.

Safeguards are also built into such proposals contained in the act as administrative monetary penalties, provincial officer orders, the prohibition to deposit waste and directors' orders to remove waste. In the cases where we're giving the courts greater authority, such as higher fines and a longer list of jailable offences, the existing

safeguards apply. Fines and jail terms imposed by the courts may always be appealed. All the usual safeguards of the judicial process will also apply to such provisions as forfeitures and seizures.

I would like to take this opportunity to urge all of my colleagues in the Legislature to vote to pass the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act. When you listen to the comments that have been made from those speaking on both sides of the House, we all recognize the importance of providing in this legislation the kind of balance that will ensure that those who are the businesses who act responsibly in the environment and in the pursuit of their business are not hampered, and that those who choose to go against these regulations will be dealt with effectively and through due process.

It seems to me that all of us in our own ridings have examples of situations which require the kind of legislative teeth that this act brings us. What we are looking at then is an opportunity to see better environmental protection. We all want to see justice for all those who break the law and threaten our air, water and land; and we all want to see those who play by the rules get their fair shot at prospering.

The minister has made reference, and so have several people commenting this evening, on the question of the ability to enforce. I would just like to take this opportunity to refer back to the fact that the ministry has not laid off any field investigators. Those people and our government are committed to maintaining and enforcing those environmental standards.

This piece of legislation makes it absolutely clear that this government is committed to maintaining and enforcing environmental standards, which will be done by focusing on activities that enhance environmental protection and produce real environmental benefits.

We will continue to be tough on polluters. This management practice affirms this. We are ensuring that the true environmental offenders won't escape scrutiny.

The Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act will help the government achieve these goals. For this reason, I believe it is an excellent piece of legislation that deserves all of our support.

The Acting Speaker: It's now 9:30 and the House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2131.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 2 December 1998

Mercredi 2 décembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 December 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 décembre 1998

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

ESTIMATES

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr Speaker, I have a message from the administrator of the government, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The administrator of the government transmits estimates and supplementary estimates of certain sums required for services of the province for the year ending 31 March 1999, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DIALYSIS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I am pleased to announce that dialysis patients from the greater Cornwall area began receiving treatment in the new Cornwall dialysis facility today. Indeed, this is welcome news to the patients and families in the area who have called on the provincial government to follow through on its April 1996 commitment to open a dialysis unit in Cornwall.

For the past two and a half years, residents from my area have urgently requested the government to act. However, the government stalled time and time again in forcing local patients to travel to Ottawa and Kingston three times each week for treatment. It is inexcusable that the government dragged its feet for so long on the issue. This has been a life-and-death struggle for local dialysis patients.

At long last, the persistent efforts of area residents have finally paid off. However, the minister knows that the initial announcement numbers do not fully meet the needs of local patients.

I would like to thank the hundreds of Cornwall and area residents who have contacted me on this very important issue, in particular to thank the many individuals, groups and organizations in my area, like the Royal Canadian Legion and others, who offered money and supplies to get the clinic up and running.

I am pleased that the local dialysis patients will finally receive treatment closer to home, and it is thanks to the residents of the greater Cornwall area. I would like to wish Dr Posen, the staff and the patients good luck.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): This morning, people from the Service Employees International Union from Sarnia-Lambton and from Kitchener-Waterloo came to the Legislature to talk about their concerns about the switch from chronic care beds to long-term-care beds in their areas. Their campaign is called Save Our Beds. They are very concerned.

I'd like to read into the record some of the words of Evelyn Teft, a 69-year-old woman whose disabled husband will be one of those affected by the switch from chronic care to long-term care.

She indicates:

"My husband and I have lived through many government changes, both good and not so good. We, like many others, have absorbed the changes and adapted where needed. Mr Harris, you and your hospital restructuring committee have gone too far. You have accomplished what no others before you have. You have angered this average 'little old lady' from Sarnia, Ontario. Your government's pursuit of the almighty dollar at any cost is the final straw."

Mrs Teft went on to say:

"I am not a politician. I'm just a very stressed-out lady who is concerned about where my husband will end up. I promised to take care of him in sickness and in health and that I will do to the best of my ability. But how does one compete with people who have no feelings? They are getting rid of the nurses who take care of these people like my husband, because they can hire unqualified help and save the almighty dollar. Will this help recognize when patients need medical help —"

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member's time has expired.

ELK RELEASE PROGRAM

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): Last Saturday night I had the privilege of attending the first annual Conservation Banquet and Auction for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, York River chapter, in Bancroft.

This banquet was attended by over 150 people and raised almost \$10,000 to go towards the reintroduction of elk in the Bancroft and north Hastings area. This \$10,000 will help the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation meet its commitment of \$100,000 per year over the next four years for the elk release program. This program is a joint program with approximately 10 partners, including the

Ministry of Natural Resources, the Safari Club and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

I'd like to congratulate the organizers of Saturday's banquet. They include John O'Donnell, Barry Wanamaker, Nancy Nieman and Al Woodcox. These individuals are very committed to seeing the successful reintroduction of elk in the Bancroft and north Hastings area. I would like to congratulate all of them on a job well done.

I would also like to add that I look forward to a decision on north Hastings' suitability as a location for the release of elk. Elk were once found in north Hastings, which I believe makes this location a perfect one for the reintroduction of elk.

I also know that many constituents of mine feel that Bancroft would be an ideal location for this program. Given that broad public support in my riding for this project, I hope the Ministry of Natural Resources will give the green light for Bancroft and north Hastings to participate in the elk release program.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I want to bring to your attention another bully tactic that Mike Harris is using against every property taxpayer in this province.

Mr Speaker, you were probably as outraged as I was when the government dropped its 33rd closure motion yesterday. Do you know that both the Greater Toronto Services Board legislation and the seventh property tax bill are going to committee the same day, at the same time?

What is more outrageous is that the Harris government will not allow public input on either bill. If any government in the history of Ontario needed help, it's this one. Who needs to hear from the experts more than Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and Al Leach?

On Monday, a government member took part in the debate on this bill. It seems to me he pretty well summarizes the attitude this government shows for local politicians. He said, "If we made a mistake, it was because we believed the municipalities had the intelligence to use the tools we provided them to ensure that small business would get the benefit of the tax cuts."

How arrogant can that be? This is clearly the contempt Mike Harris has for elected municipal politicians. Why don't these guys just listen to the experts and withdraw the bill? Let the people who know what they're doing do it. Listen to the Frontenac management board: "Withdraw Bill 79." Listen to the clerks and treasurers: "Withdraw Bill 79." Listen to the town of Prescott: "Withdraw Bill 79."

Let me tell you, these guys aren't going to be around to clean up the mess they're creating. They are following the Peter principle and have risen to the level of their incompetence.

1340

ABORTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I'm sure everybody has heard by now that the Hamilton Spectator has received another chilling, frightening package of materials from an anti-abortion messenger. The package contains truly frightening, chilling photographs, I understand, from what I heard in the news, of an image of a doctor and a policeman with a gun pointed at them. This has been part of a whole series of messages sent to this newspaper. As we well know, there was a doctor recently murdered in the United States, and we have had three shootings in Canada, one here in Ontario.

If people will recall, an all-party resolution put forward by myself was accepted by this House on October 29. I understand from the minister responsible for women's issues, in response to a question I asked, that the Solicitor General has met with the OMA. I don't know yet what happened as a result of that meeting, but that resolution called upon this government, indeed the federal government as well, to co-operate and put money into the special investigation unit. This latest development calls on the government to act immediately to put an end to this.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to put my full support behind the Northland Manor project in Port Colborne.

The Northland project is the proposed redevelopment of Northland Manor at the Port Colborne General Hospital site. I believe this proposal will help bring even better quality care to the seniors and long-term-care patients in the Port Colborne area, as well as delivering operating savings to the taxpayers.

As you may know, Northland Manor is an 87-bed home for the aged that is owned and operated by the region of Niagara. The quality of staff and the programs at Northland Manor are excellent. It has a strong reputation. However, the physical building that exists today does not meet the higher ministry standards for long-term-care facilities.

This summer, as many here will know, the Ministry of Health committed \$6.6 million to upgrade or rebuild Northland Manor to meet the new higher ministry standards. To facilitate the redevelopment project, the hospital itself has committed the property, a \$4-million contribution to capital costs and has undertaken to raise another \$1.5 million.

I encourage the region of Niagara to promptly complete their evaluation of long-term-care facilities and needs in Niagara. I expect their review will result in a strong regional endorsement to match my own of the Northland project.

I am pleased that Mayor Badawey, regional councillor Bob Saracino and the hospital board have dedicated their considerable energies and efforts behind this proposal. I think with this broad-based approach we can get the

Health Services Restructuring Commission to support it as well.

SLOT MACHINES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Tonight is a historic night in the town of Clinton. Concerned residents of this southwestern Ontario community, determined to halt the Harris bulldozer which is trying to impose a bank of slot machines on the town, have organized a public forum pitting Professor John Warren Kindt, an internationally recognized expert on and critic of the economic development argument put forward by the pro-gambling set to justify the expansion of gambling in any jurisdiction, against the well-funded and determined forces of the Ontario Lottery Corp.

Clinton residents understand that despite the pious pronouncement of the Harris government that it would not proceed with its plan to force 44 so-called charity casinos, more appropriately known as Mike Harris gambling halls, on communities across Ontario; that despite this announced retreat in the face of widespread public opposition, Harris government agents are quietly trying to sneak thousands of slot machines into cities, towns and villages under the guise of assisting race tracks.

In the absence of any meaningful consultation, Clinton citizens conducted a door-to-door survey of 844 residents and found 70% against the establishment of a new casino and only 10% in favour. This result hasn't stopped Mike Harris's lottery corporation from trying to impose the slot machines you find in their casinos on the people of Clinton.

Mike Harris has gone from being a politician who wanted nothing to do with gambling revenues to a Premier whose appetite for gambling expansion knows no limits.

We wish the people of Clinton the very best as they try to stop the Harris gambling steamroller from forcing his slot machines on their town.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): While the government continues to waste taxpayers' money by spending millions of dollars on advertising trying to convince them that the health care system is not in as bad shape as it really is, people back in our communities, like mine in Hamilton, know exactly what's happening.

Yesterday's headline: "Hospital Funding Falls Short by \$20 Million." Today's headline in the Hamilton Spectator: "Region Wants Answers about the Future of St Peter's Hospital."

The minister rolled into our community earlier this week and announced that she was providing tens of millions of dollars for health care. What she didn't talk about was the fact that, first of all, it's based on numbers that lowball the total cost of restructuring. Secondly, she didn't point out that a third of the total cost, even her low

numbers, has to be picked up by our taxpayers. It's another phantom download.

We're already out \$36 million because of your downloading, money that our property taxpayers and businesses have to pay for. We're also out \$17 million because the business education tax discriminates against Hamilton. And we're still out the \$38 million that our hospital, the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp, is out in terms of operating costs for this year. Then the minister has the audacity to come into Hamilton and pretend she's doing us some kind of favour. The fact is, you're dismantling Hamilton's health care system piece by piece just to pay for your phony tax scam.

STUDENT ISSUES

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): When I learned that Ontario youth were being asked to comment on their future, I suggested students from Orillia participate. I was proud when three students from Patrick Fogarty were invited to make a presentation at the recent Premier's conference. Joe McCann, Joe Lauer and Erin Brownlee described their future goals and thoughts on how they envision Ontario in the year 2009.

Under the guidance of teacher Brian McKenzie, the students identified possible obstacles in their path. Major issues for the students were economic uncertainty, access to jobs and job markets, and the cost of post-secondary education. In describing how these issues can form blocks, the students outlined the solutions. Among the recommendations were: public-private partnerships to establish job registries and job search databases; improved education about our economy; job shadowing in the workplace; and job shadowing so students can see how their governments work.

The students concluded that the Ontario government, business and education leaders must recognize the need for change. They asked for change with partnership, not partisanship — wise words from our future leaders. I thank these three young people for their interest and contributions to their province and to the conference.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr23, An Act respecting the Corporation of The Town of Richmond Hill.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 1998LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS
SUR LES ADOPTIONS

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 88, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect of Adoption Disclosure / Projet de loi 88, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne la divulgation de renseignements sur les adoptions.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Just briefly, this is a long-standing issue in the Legislature. I know that my colleague Alex Cullen, the member for Ottawa West, also introduced such a bill, and Tony Martin before me. I'm hoping very much that this time I can get all-party support to pass this vital bill, which deals almost exclusively with disclosure for all parties involved in the adoption triangle.

1350

CITY OF KINGSTON ACT, 1998

Mr Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr22, An Act respecting the City of Kingston.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

LOWER PROPERTY TAXES
IN HAMILTON-WENTWORTH ACT, 1998LOI DE 1998 SUR LA RÉDUCTION
DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS
PRÉLEVÉS À HAMILTON-WENTWORTH

Mr Agostino moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 89, An Act relating to property taxes in Hamilton-Wentworth / Projet de loi 89, Loi concernant les impôts fonciers prélevés à Hamilton-Wentworth.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Briefly, this bill will ensure fairness for all residents and businesses in the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth in regard to property taxes. It would ensure that for businesses that were to receive increases, the cap that is there will continue to apply, but businesses that were to receive decreases will be able to receive those decreases they're entitled to as set out initially.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice with respect to the standing committee on administration of justice and Bill 53, the Law Society Amendment Act.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The government House leader is asking for unanimous consent without notice with respect to the standing committee on administration of justice. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the standing committee on administration of justice be authorized to meet on Wednesday, December 9, 1998, outside of its regularly scheduled meeting times, but not during routine proceedings, for the purpose of considering Bill 53, An Act to amend the Law Society Act.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In view of the results in the Quebec election and in view of the very close relationship between Ontario and Quebec, I wonder if we might have unanimous consent for the Premier to state the government's position with respect to the results in Quebec and also for the Premier to tell the people across Ontario what strategy Ontario intends to pursue, given that the government of Quebec has indicated they are not interested in pursuing any sort of quick referendum process.

The Speaker: Agreed? No.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. Ontarians are questioning your commitment to public safety on our roads. You will know that there is a simple, effective and, from your perspective, cost-free solution that will help address the fatalities. There are over 200 that take place every year on Ontario streets at our intersections. That effective and simple method is red light cameras. Cities across the province are now asking for the right to be able to install, at their own expense, red light cameras to provide greater assurance of safety to members of their own communities.

Premier, why are you continuing to stall on this issue, which we have been pushing in this Legislature now for over two and a half years?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think this is for the Minister of Transportation.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): Pursuant to the question from the honourable Leader of the Opposition, I believe this government stands for

indeed the best way to deal with what has been an issue that has caused fatalities on our roads, the red light running.

Pursuant to that, I can report to this House that the Ontario cabinet has decided to pursue pilot projects on red light running which would include traditional police force road safety blitz enforcement, funded either by the municipality or through a proposal by the Insurance Bureau of Canada to fund up to \$1 million matching by the municipalities funds for police forces for road safety enforcement. But this pilot can also include red light cameras targeted at the vehicle plate registrant or targeted to the vehicle owner or the use of videotape cameras. This is the best policy and it's the policy that I think will make the most sense for Ontarians.

Mr McGuinty: I can't agree that that is the best policy. We're dragging you kicking and screaming towards red light cameras in Ontario. They've been up and running in dozens of other jurisdictions for over 15 years. They have been proven to save lives. They are effective. Why can't our municipalities, at their own expense, proceed to install red light cameras if they choose to do so today? Why can't they do everything that they could possibly do to prevent injuries and fatalities on their streets today?

Hon Mr Clement: I think we've got an obligation on all sides of this House to come up with an answer that actually works. The rhetoric is fine for campaign brochures perhaps, but we've got an obligation, at least on this side of the House, to do the right thing. The right thing is to look at projects from a variety of different sources: police blitzes, videotape cameras, targeting the driver, targeting the owner. All of those proposals are part of our proposal, not the one-sided, rhetorical proposal of the Liberal Party, but a proposal that makes sense to get at the best solution. That's the proposal that we on this side of the House are very proud of.

Mr McGuinty: This technology, Minister, is up and running, as you well know, around the world. It has been in place for over 15 years. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police says it's a good idea. The Ontario Traffic Conference says it's a good idea. The Canadian Automobile Association says it's a good idea. Why can't we take advantage of that good idea today to help reduce the risk at our intersections in communities right across the province to help save lives? Why can't we have red light cameras now?

Hon Mr Clement: I think the better idea is to actually test whether these things work. Some jurisdictions photograph the driver. Some jurisdictions photograph the back plate. Some jurisdictions have safety blitzes with real, live police officers. We think it's a good idea to test these out in a pilot project with any municipality that wants to test this out and we will get to the solution that actually works. The rhetoric of the opposition is strictly that: rhetoric. We say get the good ideas on the table, test them out, and we will see what will work and we will implement what will work. That is the commitment of the Premier and this

government. It is the best commitment to guarantee the safety of lives of Ontario drivers and pedestrians.

1400

CLASS SIZE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question to the Premier. When you took control over all education everywhere in Ontario, you told Ontarians that they could look forward to smaller class sizes and you spoke at great length of your new caps. Today we've heard that at the elementary level there are over 550 classes which exceed your cap. There's a kindergarten class with 32 students; a grade 2-3 class with 35 students, eight of whom have special needs; a grade 5 class with 39 students, 12 of whom have special needs.

Premier, what happened to your cap? You specifically promised there would be a cap on class sizes in Ontario. Do you think it's now justifiable, do you think it's a good thing, for us to have in one classroom as many as 39 students?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Education will answer.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): We did promise we would halt the growth in the increase in class sizes, because unfortunately over the last number of years the class sizes have been going up and up, particularly at the elementary level. Each and every year the class sizes across Ontario have been increasing. Yes, through Bill 160 we did bring in a number of improvements to our education system. One was to put a cap on the average size of the classes so that they could not exceed 25 on average in each and every board at the elementary level and they could not exceed 22 at the secondary level. This is what we promised to do and this is exactly what we've done.

The leader of the official opposition wants to know what has been the result. I'll tell you what the result has been. In London, the Catholic district school board: last year, 23.7 students per class; this year, 21.9 — down. Lakehead district school board, elementary: 26.79 last year; this year, 24.3 — down. Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, secondary: over 25 last year; this year, 21.74 — down. The cap has stopped the growth of the average class size. I appreciate the —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, word on the street is that Mike Harris capped class sizes at 22 for high schools and 25 for primary schools. That's why they're very disappointed to discover today that at the elementary level there are over 550 examples of cases where we've got classrooms that exceed the cap.

Let's take a look at one of the pieces of propaganda you have put out recently. This particular piece cost \$800,000, it was delivered to four million Ontario households, and it specifically says that it caps class sizes, no explanations, no conditions attached. You said that you were going to cap class sizes. That's exactly what Ontarians understood. That's what you spent \$800,000 telling them. Now they

are rightfully outraged. Why are there over 550 classes at the elementary level alone which exceed your cap?

Hon David Johnson: We have been clear all along that we would cap the average class size across the province at the elementary level and at the secondary level. This has been a clear and consistent message that we have portrayed, and indeed it's working. Way over half of the classes are beneath each of these two targets, and I can say that we are funding the school boards, giving them money so that they can reach these targets.

I appreciate the fact that the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario has raised this issue, because the question goes out, where are the boards spending this money? We are giving each and every board in the province the money to have the class sizes at 25 at the elementary and 22 at the secondary.

The secondary board in Durham: 24.6 last year, 21.7 this year — down. On and on, boards across the province —

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: You took control over all education. That's what you wanted. Fine, you have got it. Then you made a specific commitment and you spent \$800,000 advertising that commitment. You said you were capping class sizes — not the average; you said you were capping class sizes — and Ontarians understood that it meant 22 in high school and 25 at the elementary level. That's what this says.

Why is it today that there are at least 550 cases at the elementary level alone where you have exceeded your cap? It's your cap. They're your classrooms. It's your education system. You've broken your commitment. Tell Ontarians why you told them you were going to cap class sizes when in fact you haven't.

Hon David Johnson: That's absolute nonsense. We've done exactly what we said we were going to do. We said —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon David Johnson: The Liberals were in power between 1985 and 1990. They had a chance to do something and they did absolutely nothing about class sizes. We have taken the step to do exactly what we promised to do: to limit the average class size.

The Liberals indicated there would be 10,000 teachers laid off; they were wrong. They indicated there would be 10,000 fewer teachers; they were wrong. They indicated there would be \$1 billion taken out of education; wrong again. Today, once again, wrong again.

The proof is in the pudding: Simcoe Muskoka, 1997 average, 27 students per classroom, and today, 24.6; Durham Catholic District School Board, elementary, 25.1 last year, and this year, 24.5; Simcoe County District School Board, elementary, 26.3 last year, and this year, 25; and on and on it goes.

We have put a cap on the average class size exactly as we said we would for the betterment of education in Ontario.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. One of the results of the Quebec election is that the Premier of Quebec has indicated he is not interested in calling a quick referendum but he said he will concentrate his efforts on pursuing a social union and discussions around a social union. It means there is an opportunity for all of us to move forward in building a stronger Canada. This creates a delicate situation, with a key role for the Premier of Ontario. Premier, I wonder if you can define for us your position on the social union.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm in favour.

Mr Hampton: On an issue which may have an awful lot to do with a lot of relationships in this country, I think you owe it to the people of Ontario to tell them more than just, "I'm in favour."

The reality is that there is some difference on a definition of the social union. As a New Democrat, I believe the social union means that in the future no province should fear drastic unilateral cuts in funding by the federal government to areas of health care, education and social services. It means that provinces should be able to count on these things and provinces should be able to guarantee to their citizens a certain level of funding for health care — and high quality of health care — education and post-secondary education.

I ask you, Premier, what's your definition of the social union? What leadership are you going to provide on behalf of Ontario?

1410

Hon Mr Harris: As you're probably aware, I'm meeting with the chair of the premiers' council, the Honourable Roy Romanow, later today. I have been chatting with him on the phone, I've been talking with the Prime Minister, and a number of our ministers have been meeting with their ministers.

The social union discussions have been ongoing now for two years. Ontario, quite frankly, is acknowledged as the province that is leading the way in these discussions. We had seven or eight provinces onside originally and finally last summer we were able to get 10 provinces and two territorial governments to agree when the Premier of Quebec concurred that disentangling who does what — and we've made great progress in those areas — putting aside supremacy of exclusive provincial jurisdiction versus federal spending power and instead concentrating on how we work together to deliver the best-quality health care, the best-quality social programs —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: If you insist that you are leading the way, I think the citizens of Ontario at least deserve to know from you what direction you want to lead in on this very important issue. Is it Preston Manning's direction? I can tell you, when I listen to Preston Manning, it means unilateral authority over health and education and social services moving to the provinces. I can tell you from

listening to some of his other speeches, it will mean more cuts to health and education and social services.

People in Ontario have experienced your cuts to hospitals, your cuts to colleges and universities, your cuts to education, your cuts to transit, your cuts to social assistance. We need to know, is this about ensuring that the federal government puts the \$6 billion back that it took from health and post-secondary education? If that is the case, does it mean that you're prepared to go to the table and guarantee, as the western premiers are prepared to guarantee, that all of that money will go back into health and education?

Hon Mr Harris: I've said about 50 times now that, yes, of course we'll guarantee that's where the dollars go. The social union discussions are ongoing, and the transfer of dollars. As you know, contrary to what you said in the House — and you actually know it — we have cut no funding to health, to education, to other areas. In fact, the only cuts that have been made to health and education have come from the federal government in Ottawa. We are in discussions, as you will know, and our first priority is asking for a restoration of the health care dollars that the Liberals took away from the provinces. That is the first priority as part of the discussions.

What I think is going on here is that an NDP Premier is coming to visit me this afternoon and for the first time in three and a half years you've expressed some interest in social union.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: My next question is also for the Premier. I merely want to ask you what your position is on the social union and to get you to spell out the direction you want to go in. I don't know why it has to be as painful as pulling teeth. You should be willing to come forward with those facts and that information.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): The question I want to ask you now, Premier, is this: Could you tell us how much you think the rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Toronto has gone up in the last year? Do you have any idea of that?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No, I don't precisely know the amount but I'm pretty sure you do and you're going to tell me, and I welcome that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Premier, the reason I asked you is because I've got a report here from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. It is their annual rental vacancy survey. You and your housing minister go around the province saying that your so-called Tenant Protection Act won't force up rents for average families in the province. In fact, we now have the evidence which shows that rents are going up very seriously. For example, this survey done by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp shows that the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Toronto has

gone from \$821 a month up to \$881 a month. That's a jump of \$720 a year for tenant households, who make an average of just \$34,000 a year. Premier, can you tell us how you justify forcing families with an income of \$34,000 a year to pay a rent increase of \$720 a year?

Hon Mr Harris: I know the Minister of Housing can.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It's very simple. It falls under the Rent Control Act, which uses the same formula to control rents that the NDP had when they were in power. It's exactly the same formula.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: The rent control formula stayed in place. Anybody living in an apartment who had an increase in their rent this year falls under the rent control guidelines. The opposition parties, the Liberals in particular, keep standing up and saying that rent control is gone, which is absolutely false. The rent control formula stayed in place. For anybody who lives in an apartment who has an increase this year, or any year, the amount of the rent is controlled by the rent control formula.

Obviously, if somebody moves out of an apartment and the apartment is vacant, it's not an increase in rent, it's just a new rent.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

1420

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I don't mean to be disrespectful, but I don't think you know what you're talking about. This is a 7.3% increase that we are talking about, nothing to do with the Rent Control Act that you're talking about.

Your rent decontrol scheme was and is designed to jack up rents. That's all it was intended to do. We've always said to you and to your government that this was a big hidden cost of the Harris agenda. Lower middle class families get a small income tax cut but they get to pay higher property taxes through their rents; they get to pay much higher tuition fees, higher transit fares and higher drug costs; they face a health care system and an educational system that is on the brink of ruin.

In my view, it is your responsibility —

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Marchese: — and the Premier's responsibility to protect modest-income earners from these skyrocketing rent increases. What do you believe is your responsibility towards —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: It certainly is our responsibility to ensure that tenants are protected, and that's exactly what we did and that's why we left the rent control formula in place, for exactly that reason.

The other thing the member mentioned was property taxes on apartment buildings. When your government was in power they were four times higher on an apartment than on a single-family residence. This government has taken action to allow municipalities to bring that back to single-family residence.

We've taken action to protect tenants, action that you never did, and I can't understand why you didn't. You stand up there and say that you're the party that protects tenants and you didn't do a damned thing to protect them while you were in office. We've taken action to make sure that property taxes on apartments are brought down. We've made sure tenants are protected by making sure —

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Marchese: To continue with this, again, we're talking about a 7.3% increase —

Interjections.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Apologize to the member, Speaker.

The Speaker: I apologize to the member for Fort York. It was my mistake. It was not a supplementary. It's a new question. Official opposition.

Interjection: Roll back the clock.

The Speaker: It stopped.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): But you took time off us.

The Speaker: Six seconds, come on. A six-second mistake I'll accept. New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm not going anywhere near that one.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. I have a question which goes to your personal integrity. In 1994, when it was brought to your attention that the NDP government had spent \$1.5 million promoting Jobs Ontario, you responded as follows:

"It's a propaganda blitz so you can pat yourself on the back to voters. It's certainly morally a misuse of taxpayers' dollars. I'm shocked that they're doing it. I think it's wrong."

Premier, if you believe that spending \$1.5 million on political propaganda is morally a misuse of taxpayers' dollars, what do you call it when you spend \$47 million of taxpayer dollars on political propaganda?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): When it comes to the amount of money, I call it —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I think there are two parts to the question. When it comes to the amount of money, I call it still far short of what the Liberals spent six, seven, eight years ago. When it comes to indexing the cost of advertising for inflation, it is significantly less than the Liberal government spent, by any measure, over the life of your government or, year for year, what the Liberals spent while they were in government. I think it is —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, this goes to your personal integrity. When the NDP government spent \$1.5 million

on their political propaganda, you said it was morally a misuse of taxpayers' dollars. You said you were shocked they were doing it. You said it was wrong. You today are spending, to this point in time, 47 million taxpayer dollars on political propaganda. What happened? You said it was wrong. You said it shocked you. You said it was morally a misuse of money. What happened to your integrity? Why is it that we're not spending this money on health care and education? Why is it that you're no longer shocked? Why is it suddenly no longer morally a misuse of taxpayer dollars?

Hon Mr Harris: As I said, there are two parts: There is the content of the ads and there is the amount of advertising. On the amount of advertising, it's a matter of public record — accepted, I'm sure, by all 130 members of the Legislature — that we spend far less than the Liberal Party spent when they were in office. Second, you have to look at contents of ads.

We criticized ads like Smile Ontario — \$10 million that we didn't think was particularly beneficial in communicating a program. We criticized the ad with the big poster of the now leader of the New Democratic Party that was promoting parks or some feel-good stuff, as opposed to ads that publicized programs or invited input or invited comments back.

We have been responding to a huge number of requests that said: "Talk to us. Involve us more. Give us questionnaires. Let us have a say." All of our ads promote Ontario abroad. They promote our companies, they promote our businesses, they promote our tourist establishments and they promote our programs. We invite —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1430

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I want to ask the Premier about another of his outrageous statements. As we know, the Premier was out last week with his jar of loonies searching for photo opportunities where he could tell people about his 30% income tax scheme. But you kept running into people who said that they would rather see the money going into health and education. Then you encountered someone who said that they were very concerned about tuition fees. When you were confronted about the problem of lower-income students and tuition fees, you said: "If a university turns them down for reasons of finances, we'll shut the university down. That's our commitment."

Premier, yours is the government that has cut university and college funding by \$400 million a year. You're the Premier who has frankly influenced colleges and universities to increase tuition fees. We know that tuition fees have to be reduced. I've said we should reduce them by rolling back some of your income tax scheme. Could you tell us how you're going to help those students by shutting down the university?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I was making the point that if you want to get public money from this

government and run a university or a community college in the province of Ontario, you must guarantee access, regardless of financial circumstances, for every student who qualifies in the province of Ontario. That was our commitment. That is the commitment of the colleges and universities.

What has been the result of that to date? The result of that to date has been: The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds participating in post-secondary education in 1997-98 was 35%; under your government, 28%; under the Liberals, 23%. Clearly, far more young people are now, under our government, because of our massive infusion of OSAP money —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Premier. Supplementary, member for Nickel Belt.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): You're making the numbers up. Enrolments are dropping.

Hon Mr Harris: You are a disgrace. Your party was a disgrace.

The Speaker: Premier, come to order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Hold on. Member for Nickel Belt.

Mr Blain K. Morin (Nickel Belt): To the Premier: You claim to be providing more funding, but your numbers just don't add up. We've been asking for a full accounting of your funding claims, without much success. The stakeholders are asking as well, and they can't get answers.

Let's look at the facts. This government slashed funding by \$400 million. The latest figures from Stats Canada show a sharp drop in student enrolment linked to the funding cuts. Tuition is soaring, colleges and universities are squeezed, and student debt keeps going up. The Canadian Federation of Students is also calling on you today for answers.

When you mix unbelievable claims that you've increased funding with reckless threats to close universities, why should anybody believe you today?

Hon Mr Harris: If you can find a university or a college that is turning down a student who has academic qualifications for lack of money, I want you to bring that student to my attention. They are not allowed to do that and operate with public money in Ontario. What has happened —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Hold it. Member for Nickel Belt, member for Ottawa West and member for Cochrane South, come to order. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: What has happened since we have taken office? There is \$134 million more in OSAP; \$87 million more from the 30% tuition set-aside; \$7.5 million in Ontario graduate scholarships; plus \$20 million more in the Ontario student opportunity trust fund; plus \$60 million more in the access to opportunities program — over \$300 million — plus tax credit for student loan interest, \$20 million; plus tax-free RRSP withdrawals for students, \$10 million; plus tax relief for part-time students, \$25 million; plus \$600 million in new bursary money. That's why there are more students in

colleges and universities and a far higher percentage than when you were in office.

SENTENCING

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): My question is for the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services and concerns the impact of federal legislation on Ontario's public safety. Minister, yesterday the very highly regarded president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the chief of York region's police, Julian Fantino, was denied an opportunity to speak to the House of Commons committee on justice and human rights. The committee is considering a private member's bill which provides for the imposition of consecutive sentences on criminals who commit multiple murders or multiple sex offences.

My constituents and local law enforcement officials have told me they want to see more accountability in the justice system. They have told me they want to see criminals sentenced appropriately for serious repeated offences. They have told me they are frustrated by a justice system that does not match the punishment with the severity of the crime —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Solicitor General.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I want to thank the member for Durham-York for asking about this very important issue, and I want to assure the member that the government is following the hearings on this legislation quite closely. We're very concerned about making sure criminals are punished appropriately.

I think the treatment of Chief Fantino by the Liberal majority on the committee was nothing short of shameful. They offended not only the police officers in this province but victims' organizations and the public on this issue. I can tell the member that the Attorney General and I have written to the sponsor of the bill expressing Ontario's support for the principles of consecutive sentencing and, in effect, truth in sentencing for convicted criminals in this country.

Mrs Munro: Minister, thank you for speaking up for law-abiding Ontarians who want the justice system to work for the victims of crime, not the criminals.

There have been reports that ultimately the federal government will kill this legislation and take no action on the issue of consecutive sentencing. My constituents want something done about repeat serious offenders. Is this going to be just another example of the federal government's mishandling of the justice file?

Hon Mr Runciman: I hope the federal government does take action on making sure that repeat serious offenders serve appropriate jail sentences for their crimes. To the Liberal members across the room who are heckling on this issue, I want to ask them to step back, think about this one and encourage their colleagues in Ottawa to take this issue very seriously indeed.

Ontarians expect and deserve a better justice system than one that grants get-out-of-jail-free cards to criminals who serve time for just one of multiple offences. If the Liberals were serious about fighting crime, they would follow Ontario's lead by investing in front-line police officers, quit rubber-stamping pardons for sex offenders, abandon their expensive and ineffective gun registry scheme, and take effective public safety measures like cracking down on gun smuggling.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Originally I wanted to ask the Premier, until he left the House.

The Premier maybe could take this question; he's back.

This question has to do with a complaint that 5,000 people in Kitchener-Waterloo have about you and the other members locally, Minister. For the last number of weeks and months, they have had a campaign to save the beds that you have cut in their hospitals.

Premier, these people want an answer. Why are you ripping beds that are needed out of St Mary's hospital such that now they're releasing people and in the last 17 days they have had to shut down 20 times to new patients? It's the same thing at Grand River hospital. They have also had an increase in people going to emergency, partly because they have to let people go too early.

There has been a campaign to save these beds in Kitchener-Waterloo. You may know what they aren't aware of: that, yes, you have cut \$16 million, fired the nurses and got rid of the beds, but you plan to cut some more.

Will you stand up and give back to the people of Kitchener-Waterloo the beds that you have cut and assure them you will not take away more?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Health —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Health.

1440

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I am very pleased to respond to the member opposite. Unfortunately, the member opposite continues to distort many of the facts. Certainly yesterday —

Interjections.

The Speaker: You can't accuse a member of distorting the facts.

Interjection.

The Speaker: You know what? You've got to withdraw that too, so let's not go there. Withdraw the comment.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I withdraw that, Mr Speaker.

I think what the member across the way needs to do is to get all of his facts as accurate as they can be in order that the information being communicated is accurate. We know that yesterday some of the information that was communicated was not accurate as it related to Brockville.

I would say to you today that fortunately for the people in Kitchener-Waterloo, our government has addressed years of inaction by your government and by the NDP government, and we have added \$59 million in spending. In fact, the commission has recommended major improvements to the health system in Kitchener-Waterloo. They have recommended an MRI. They have recommended a new cancer centre.

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have made changes that will enable our community to be the beneficiary of services at home. They won't have to travel —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, the people of Kitchener-Waterloo are again going to be disappointed. There are 5,000 of them here who have signed a petition against those kinds of phony answers.

There are another 12,000 people in Sarnia who also understand what you and your government are really about. These 12,000 people include the people who delivered them today. They are the housekeepers who clean the linen, they are the RPNs providing the care —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Simcoe West, come to order, please.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): You've had your chance.

The Speaker: Order. I'll deal with it, thank you. Member for York South.

Mr Kennedy: Some of the other people here today are the cooks providing the meals, the porters who carry these patients, and they know what you refuse to accept: 49% of the chronic care beds in Sarnia are being eliminated. You have cut from there, just like you cut 251 beds and all kinds of money out of Kitchener-Waterloo. You've done the same thing in Sarnia.

We've heard from spouses who want to know what is going to happen. We have heard from the people who provide the care, and they know that the care isn't there any more.

They want you to answer simply and directly as the Minister of Health: Will you guarantee that those beds will be there and that you will stop the cutting of chronic care and acute beds in Sarnia? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm not surprised that the member didn't respond to the facts as I stated them. You and your party alleged initially that we had removed \$8.6 million from health care in Waterloo region. I have just told you that we have increased health spending by \$59 million. That's how the facts are not communicated accurately.

But let's take a look at Lambton county, because again we are taking the initiatives to reform the health system in this province —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister, this is not helpful. Please.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Renfrew North, please come to order.

I want to just ask the members, let's just try and get back on the rails. I think it's derailing here. We'll respond to the questions and try to stay away from the personal attacks. Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'd like to quote from a comment that was made by the chair of the Petrolia board in Lambton, who said, "This government is creating a modern, efficient and integrated system of care for patients," referring to the patients in Lambton. I would also indicate to you that our government has increased health spending in Sarnia-Lambton by about \$41.5 million. As well, if we take a look at the hospital facilities, every facility is staying open, and the number of beds in Lambton county is actually increasing from 1,272 in March 1996 to 1,374 in 2003. There are going to be —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, third party.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is for the Premier. We have called on you to seek a written apology from —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Wellington, I caution you.

Mr Silipo: Premier, we have called on you to seek a written apology from Conservative member Doug Ford for his reference to "dark people" in a televised interview. You have written back to our leader declining to do this, citing what you call Mr Ford's "sincere personal efforts to reach out to all cultural and ethnic groups." From Mr Ford, on the other hand, the only response has been an aggressive, unrepentant attack on my leader, Howard Hampton.

As we saw on CBC TV, Mr Ford described how he "went along the Westway and some people of ethnic origin were playing cards in the dirt there. I stopped and I asked them their names, and they could not speak English." Apparently he then signed them up as Conservative Party members.

Laughter.

Mr Silipo: This may be funny, and at some levels it is, but it's also quite serious, because the tone and climate that you and your government set is extremely important in our society's efforts to secure that racism is unacceptable throughout the province. I want to ask you again, do you not understand the importance of finding the kinds of comments that Mr Ford has made completely unacceptable and therefore asking him unequivocally to apologize for those comments?

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

I don't know if that's a government question, and I understand where you're going on it.

I'll let the question stand to the Premier.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think you did send me a letter asking me to speak with Mr Ford. I did. I sent you a letter back, along with his explanation and his personal assurance. The matter is closed.

Mr Silipo: Premier, this is not just a question of Mr Ford's personal assurances; it's a question of whether he acknowledges and whether particularly now you acknowledge as Premier that what he did was wrong and therefore warrants at the very least a clear apology. That is something you completely ignored in your letter. Let me suggest to you that therefore what concerns us is your government's actions and your actions as Premier in how you deal with this issue and issues similar to that. Every time you do not take a clear stand against this type of activity, you lead to the perpetuation of this type of mentality throughout the province.

I could cite to you all the actions you have taken as a government to get rid, piece by piece, of all the anti-racism activities in the Ministry of Education, in the Ministry of Citizenship and in all other ministries. Perhaps that's why you're not prepared to take the tough decisions that you should. But I also want to tell you, what troubles us is that we see then a growing racism in the province that is reflected in all sorts of ways. It's reflected in the kind of regrettably derogatory comments that we've seen throughout and in the kind of —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. Government members, listen. The member can ask the questions. It's not up to the Speaker to determine whether they're acceptable questions; it's up to the broader public. I just want to ask the members to come to order. You have five seconds left to place your question, member for Dovercourt.

Mr Silipo: We expect a high standard from the Premier of the province, as citizens do. Will you understand that and ask Mr Ford to apologize for his comments?

Hon Mr Harris: I have acted and I appreciate your advice and concern on the matter.

1450

HYDRO RATES

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): My question is for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. Earlier this summer I was honoured to sit on the standing committee that dealt with Bill 35, the Energy Competition Act. Certainly, the representations we had heard left me with the impression that this was a bill that would result in savings for energy consumers all across Ontario.

Accordingly, I was concerned yesterday when I read an article by Robert Blohm in the National Post that indicated he believed that the Energy Competition Act would cause an increase in my constituents' hydro bills in the form of hidden taxes. Minister, what reassurances can I give to my constituents that their hydro bills will not in fact increase as a result of this legislation?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank the honourable member for Scarborough East for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to clarify Mr Blohm's comments yesterday. It's unfortunate that the National Post would print such an article. It's erroneous, because the article contains not one iota of

truth in it. It talks about raising prices and hidden taxes. There's no such thing in Bill 35. Clearly, there are no new taxes introduced in the legislation. Clearly, the consensus in the province is that hydro prices will go down as a result of the actions we've taken.

Anywhere in the world where we've seen competition introduced into the electricity sector, including Australia, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Sweden and California, we've seen prices fall. So Mr Blohm has no basis anywhere in the world that we're aware of — and the honourable member for Scarborough East sat on a committee and reviewed this with all parties — that prices would go up, so I don't know on what basis he wrote his article.

Mr Gilchrist: Minister, I guess the other part of his article that caused me some concern was the suggestion that somehow there would be barriers brought in by this legislation that would effectively discourage new investment in the energy sector in Ontario.

In the committee hearings all parties heard just the opposite, particularly in Sarnia, that this bill would prompt new investment.

I know from the presentation you made before the committee that you've been meeting with energy players in the industry over the past year. As we approach the open energy market that is the goal of Bill 35, is it true that companies will be making new investments as a result of that bill being passed?

Hon Mr Wilson: Yes. The allegation was made in the article that no new jobs will be created; 1,000 new jobs have been created, and that was before the bill even passed through this Legislature.

We've seen the largest cogeneration plant of its kind announced by TransAlta, a \$400-million new project creating hundreds of jobs in Sarnia, other companies like Sentinel — Sudbury Hydro is building its first cogeneration plant. Toronto Hydro is building its first cogeneration plant with a Montreal company called Boralex. That one is great for the environment because it tears down the smokestack that's on the sewage treatment plant that's down on Commissioner Street. It will tear down the smokestack and use the methane gas to produce electricity, something that other governments should have done a long time ago and failed to do.

To date in summary on the job front, the bill only passed a couple of weeks ago and we've seen \$1 billion worth of new investment in this sector. We have many more companies poised to make new investments in this sector and I think you'll hear those announcements in the very near future.

VEHICLE REGISTRATION

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. Because your ministry is not doing its job, because of its lack of control when it comes to registering vehicles in Ontario, car thieves and con artists are using your ministry to launder stolen cars and sell them to the unsuspecting public.

Using your ministry's documents for protection, innocent and unsuspecting victims like Mrs Phyllis Lamont, who is in the gallery here today, are being defrauded of thousands of dollars — in her case, \$25,000.

Because of your pathetically loose procedures and any lack of safeguards or checks in your ministry, our car thief was able to defraud Mrs Lamont of her hard-earned \$25,000, paid unknowingly for a stolen car that was registered too easily through your ministry by a car thief.

Minister, don't you think your ministry should be held responsible for what happened to Mrs Lamont and what is happening to people like Mrs Lamont in this province? Because of your negligence, because of your not doing anything, you've got car thieves hitting a bonanza here in Ontario.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I am pleased to inform this House that, despite what the honourable member says, this ministry has been doing a lot to ensure that the car thief ring industry is reduced in this province. In fact, in July of this year we announced the stolen and salvaged vehicle project, which amounted to branding for cars, so we could track the cars through the system. No longer can car thieves go out and purchase a VIN through an auction and then track it through the system on a stolen vehicle.

The case that the honourable member mentions is a new twist by the criminal element to launder their stolen cars. I can tell the honourable member that we are working with the province of Quebec and other provinces to ensure that their information on stolen cars and whatnot is shared with us, and vice versa, so that that particular avenue is closed for car thieves in Ontario.

Mr Colle: Minister, you don't know what's going on in this province. Car thieves are using your ministry to launder stolen cars. As we stand here today, car thieves are walking in, giving their first names and registering cars. They're using stolen vehicle registration permits from Quebec that your ministry doesn't have connected with your computers. It's a joke. Subsequently you've got innocent victims like Mrs Lamont, who wrote asking you to do something, and you're not doing anything.

Your ministry is a farce when it comes to registering vehicles. The police know it's a farce, the insurance investigators know it's a farce, innocent victims know it's a farce. You are not protecting innocent people who are trying to register cars. When are you going to take responsibility?

Tell Mrs Lamont you're getting to get her money back. Get her \$25,000 back, which is the result of your negligence, because all your ministry does is rubber-stamp applications. It doesn't even ask for names, it doesn't ask for any ID; it just gives the registration form, no questions asked. It's a joke.

Hon Mr Clement: Obviously it's of great concern to this government when cars are stolen. It's one of the most common crimes in this province, unfortunately. That is why, after years of dithering by former governments, we announced the stolen and salvaged vehicle program this summer. That was applauded by the insurance industry

and it was applauded by police services, because they know that with branding and with the proper information available to the police services, we can get at these problems. There is always a new scam out there, and I want you to know that this government will not stand still and will not rest until these scams are dealt with.

Mr Colle: Get her money back.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Oakwood, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order. Minister, do you want to —

Hon Mr Clement: I'm done.

Interjection.

The Speaker: He had his time. He didn't use it all.

PETITIONS

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition with over 6,000 names in support of the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, oppose the proposed closure of Niagara's only denominational hospital and the devastating effects that proposal will have on patients and potential patients from across the region.

"We ask that the Health Services Restructuring Commission reassess its recommendations for the Niagara region and ensure quality, accessibility and affordability through a continued role for the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with the petition.

1500

ADOPTION

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have a series of petitions here signed by residents in Spencerville, Brockville and Iroquois Falls with respect to adoption reform. I will summarize the petition.

These petitioners are asking the Legislature to adopt Bill 39, the Access to Adoption Information Statute Law Amendment Act, which would allow access to birth registration and adoption records for adult adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents and other relatives, implement a no-contact notice option, recommend optional counselling, offer access to other adoption information and acknowledge open adoption.

I am proud to affix my signature to it.

GERMAN HERITAGE

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the people of German descent have been a part of Ontario's history since the days of pre-Confederation; and

"Whereas the German culture has always been an integral component of the cultural mosaic of Ontario; and

"Whereas we wish to demonstrate official recognition of the positive contribution of German heritage in the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass the bill entitled the German Pioneers Day Act and we respectfully petition the government of Ontario to designate the day following Thanksgiving Day as the date of the annual German Pioneers Day."

I am happy to affix my signature.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I'm pleased to present today a petition gathered by the reeve of the great townships of Brudenell and Lyndoch, signed by over 800 people in the country of Renfrew, which petition reads in part:

"Whereas the Ontario government has directly downloaded services such as policing, general welfare assistance and certain provincial highways to municipalities, resulting in substantial expenditure increases; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has offered some municipalities one-time funding for reconstruction purposes of certain crown land access roads with all future maintenance costs to be incurred by the individual municipalities;

"Therefore, be it resolved that since municipalities have received many downloaded services causing additional expenditures to local property taxpayers, the province be petitioned that having regard to the fact that the Ontario government owns very substantial amounts of property in rural counties like Renfrew that the province now be required to pay full taxation on the lands and properties owned by the government of Ontario in counties like Renfrew."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and present it to the House on behalf of the good people of Brudenell and Lyndoch.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition signed by 5,765 people. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are the residents covered by the tri-county Lambton-Kent-Essex; and

"Whereas we are the taxpayers covered under the Health Services Restructuring Commission, Lambton hospitals; and

"Whereas we are the health care providers and users;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reinstate all complex continuing care beds and transitional care beds and funding slated to

be removed under the Lambton hospitals restructuring report."

I am proud to add my name to this petition.

BEACH USE

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): "To the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Attorney General or his representative take action on behalf of the people of Ontario, by injunction, to prevent further prohibition of the public's use of traditionally used beaches of Tiny township."

The Preserve Beach Use Association is a large group of concerned citizens who feel that the reasonable public use of historically open beaches should continue and are well aware that use of the beach is the issue as opposed to ownership. The over 1,600 signatures enclosed represent a number of concerned citizens as well as some who are not physically in the area. This is signed by the co-chairs, Ross Hastings and Gail Barrie.

GLENGARRY OUTREACH SERVICES

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents of north and south Glengarry, request an inquiry by the Ministry of Health into the hereunder:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows to investigate:

"The administration and management of the funds of the Glengarry Outreach Services regarding: (a) Audit covering April 1, 1997 to March 31, 1998 (closed). (b) Audit covering April 1, 1998 to August 31, 1998 (pending);

"Whereas we, the residents of north and south Glengarry, request an inquiry by the Ministry of Health into the hereunder:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows to investigate:

"The reason the Victorian Order of Nurses was chosen to administer the funds for Glengarry Outreach Services when the finances of the Victorian Order of Nurses have been reported to be in a serious state of deficit.

"Whereas we, the residents of north and south Glengarry, request an inquiry by the Ministry of Health into the hereunder:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to investigate:

"The disbursement of monies accumulated by donations and fundraising activities."

That's signed by 100 of the residents of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and the Cornwall riding.

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I've got a petition from Centro Clinton Daycare. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

"Whereas providing daycare spaces is critical for the families in Toronto that need access to them; and

"Whereas the well-being of children should not be sacrificed for tax cuts; and

"Whereas the provincial government has significantly cut the budgets for Toronto school boards; and

"Whereas under the provincial government's ill-conceived Bill 160 there is no flexibility for boards to make up for those cuts; and

"Whereas daycare spaces in schools are now threatened by these cuts with the prospect of full-cost recovery arrangements with daycares and the threat of school closures;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to repeal Bill 160 immediately, and

"Further be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario instruct the Minister of Education and Training to restore meaningful and flexible funding to the Toronto school boards to ensure that they are able to continue to accommodate our community daycares; and

"Further be it resolved that the Honourable Dave Johnson, Minister of Education and Training, takes responsibility for his government's funding cuts rather than passing the buck to school boards who have no control over provincial government spending cuts."

I support this petition and I'm signing it.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 67 people.

"Whereas most Ontario residents do not have adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Honourable Mike Harris:

"Whereas there are circumstances at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital that could cause the cessation of the anaesthetists' services, the loss of two psychiatrists and the loss of the diabetic education service in the near future; and

"Whereas these facilities are required by the people in a very large area of the Kenora district; and

"Whereas even a short-term elimination of these facilities could result in the loss of the professionals providing these services;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, are calling on your government to provide an immediate long-term solution to guarantee the continuation of health care facilities currently available at our district hospital."

I have certainly added my name to that petition.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have petitions and letters from the people of Riverdale, parents and students, who came to my office yesterday on the anniversary of the passage of Bill 160. The petition reads:

"Whereas the province must develop a funding formula based on children and programs, not square feet and dollars, and it must reflect the differing needs of communities across Ontario;

"Whereas the province must immediately cease spending our tax dollars on education advertising;

"Whereas the new high school curriculum has been developed too hastily and implementation must be delayed for at least one year;

"Whereas Bill 160 gave the Minister of Education the obligation to fund the needs of all Ontario students;

"Therefore, on December 1, the anniversary of the passage of Bill 160, we join parents and students across the province to demand that the minister live up to that responsibility."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I have a petition here to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas it is important to honour the courageous memory and sacrifices of Canada's war dead and of our veterans who fought in defence of our national rights and freedoms;

"Whereas there is a need for succeeding generations of young, school-age Canadians to learn more about the true meaning of Remembrance Day;

"Whereas Ontario veterans' associations have created excellent educational materials for use in Ontario schools on the meaning and significance of Remembrance Day;

"Whereas a special Remembrance Day curriculum for all grades in Ontario's education system, developed on the basis of the programs by Ontario veterans' associations and involving their direct participation, would increase awareness of and appreciation for Canada's wartime sacrifices in the hearts and minds of all Ontario citizens;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial Ministry of Education and Training ensure that a suitable Remembrance Day learning unit be included in the curriculum of all grades of Ontario's education system."

I support this petition and have signed it.

1510

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have petitions coming in from all across the province from people concerned about this government's abdication of responsibility for heritage, both built and natural, and the petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas heritage is vitally important to the social and economic health of Ontario communities and Ontario residents; and

"Whereas community museums, galleries and heritage organizations work hard to protect, promote, manage and develop our provincial heritage resources; and

"Whereas the provincial government has a responsibility to the people of Ontario to promote the value of heritage and heritage conservation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has abdicated their responsibility for heritage by cutting support to community museums, galleries and heritage organizations; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not implemented a new heritage act that would give communities the ability to better protect heritage sites; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not undertaken meaningful consultation with Ontario's heritage community;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide stronger support to Ontario's heritage institutions and organizations and to work with the people of Ontario to establish a new heritage act."

I have some from the Norfolk Historical Society, Brockville and various other communities, and I'm glad to sign my name to the petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition signed by approximately 600 people, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are the residents covered by the Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin District Health Council; and

"Whereas we are the taxpayers covered under the Health Services Restructuring Commission, Waterloo health services restructuring report; and

"Whereas we are the health care providers and users;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reinstate all acute care beds and funding slated to be removed under the Waterloo region health services restructuring preliminary report."

I am proud to be able to affix my signature.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I have a petition I want to present on behalf of the member for Leeds-Grenville, the Honourable Bob Runciman. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such discrimination."

That has been signed by a number of constituents of Leeds-Grenville, and I add my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 56, An Act to establish the Greater Toronto Services Board and the Greater Toronto Transit Authority and to amend the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority Act, when Bill 56 is next called as a

government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on general government;

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted;

That the standing committee on general government be authorized to meet for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on Monday, December 7, 1998, from 9 am to 12 pm and following routine proceedings until the completion of clause-by-clause consideration;

That at 4:30 pm on Monday, December 7, 1998, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on general government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, after which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote for third reading of the bill may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

I think all members of the Legislature would agree in principle that now is the time to move forward with a Greater Toronto Services Board. I think it's recognized that there is a tremendous need to coordinate the services across the GTA to make sure they are delivered in an efficient, expedient and cost-effective manner. It's important for everyone to recognize that this bill, Bill 56, should be passed before the Christmas break. Then we will have the GTSB up and running on January 1. That's important because there have been steps taken previously to transfer the operation of GO Transit to the municipalities and this legislation will allow the Greater Toronto Services Board to be responsible for the operation of GO Transit.

It's also my hope that the new board will be up and have its first meeting early in the new year so that it can begin that very important work of providing better cooperation and coordination of the greater Toronto area.

All the municipalities have for the most part agreed in principle that there's a need for better coordination of the delivery of services in the GTA. There are some differences of opinion from different municipalities as to whether the board should be stronger than has been recommended. There are certain municipalities that feel we should initially give total responsibility to the board to be responsible for all services and all aspects of service delivery within the Greater Toronto Services Board. There are other municipalities, on the other hand, that feel the board is too strong as it is and that we shouldn't put the board in place and should only transfer the responsibilities for GO Transit to the municipalities at this time and then wait for some future date to do it.

I think the time for that debate has come and gone. Now is the time that we have to show some leadership and decisive action in making sure that we get this very important piece of legislation through the House and enacted and in place by January 1. Obviously, that is why we are moving this time allocation motion. Time allocation motions are designed specifically for that purpose, to make sure that we can take important pieces of legislation and get them through the House in a timely fashion so that their recommendations can be implemented in a timely fashion, so that the legislation that is designed to provide better services to the municipalities can be enacted. That's the principle behind the time allocation motion, and I think this bill is a prime example of why time allocation motions should be enacted on occasion.

Some would think that the first order of business for the Greater Toronto Services Board would be the election of the new chair. We have given the board authority to elect its first chair, and I would like to point out that that is a departure —

1520

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Sur un point d'ordre, monsieur le Président, la section 11 du Règlement nous dit que,

« a) la présence d'au moins 20 députés, y compris le Président de l'Assemblée, est nécessaire pour que l'Assemblée puisse valablement exercer ses pouvoirs. »

Je crois qu'on n'a pas les 20.

Le Président suppléant : Vous avez entièrement raison. Nous allons vérifier s'il y a quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung / Le Président suppléant fait entendre la sonnerie d'appel des députés.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

As I was saying, I thought the first order of business for the Greater Toronto Services Board should be the election of the chair. We have given the board itself the authority

to do that, which is a departure from what has taken place when other regions were formed. I think for all of the regions in Ontario that were put together in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the government of the day appointed the chair to ensure that they would have someone in place who could carry out the direction of the government and make sure that it got up and running efficiently. We, on the other hand, think the most democratic process would be to allow the Greater Toronto Services Board itself to deliberate, to search, to find an individual, male or female, who can provide the leadership to the board to ensure that the coordination and delivery of services is done well.

It's a very important position. It's one that I know the board, when it is entering into those deliberations, will take a considerable amount of time and effort to perform.

I know there are several individuals who are prepared to put their names forward to act as chair for the first term of the board. The several individuals I am aware of are very capable. I don't want to name them at this point in time, but I'm sure that most individuals would know who they were and that anyone of that quality and of that stature would be able to do a very fine job. I think when the board does its search and does its review of an individual to chair the board, there will be a great number of individuals who will put their names forward, and I'm sure they will have a very difficult choice to make in selecting the best of a very fine group of individuals.

Another aspect of discussion on this bill is the amount of public consultation that has taken place. There have been some comments made by members of the opposition that further public input and further public debate is required before we move forward on this bill. I would like to point out that in my view there has probably been more public input, more study, more debate, more individual meetings with members of council, with councils as a whole, of all the municipalities within the greater Toronto area, than with any other piece of legislation we've dealt with.

Just as an example, I'd like to point out the past studies that have taken place on the GTSB issue.

The GTA task force by Anne Golden reported to the government in January 1996. I'd like to emphasize the point that there is strong recognition and acceptance in principle of the need for more coordination in the greater Toronto area. Anne Golden was appointed by the previous government to undertake a study of the greater Toronto area, which I think emphasizes, as I pointed out, that all parties recognize the need for the GTSB to be put in place as quickly as possible.

Following the Golden report, there was a review panel on the GTA task force by Libby Burnham, who took the recommendations of the Golden report throughout the GTA for further input and further refinement and reported back in April 1996.

Further to that, David Crombie is a former mayor of the city of Toronto, a former member of the federal Parliament and a former cabinet minister with a great deal of expertise on Toronto and the surrounding area. He's presently chair of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust and has

extensive knowledge of what is required to ensure the delivery of services and coordination throughout the greater Toronto area. He took the reports, met with numerous individuals and reported his recommendations and findings in December 1996.

We then formed some draft recommendations on where we felt the government should go with the creation of a Greater Toronto Services Board and we retained Milt Farrow, who was, prior to his retirement, a career civil servant involved in municipal affairs. Mr Farrow was recognized by all the municipalities within the greater Toronto area as having unique experience and expertise to understand the total issues of what was required to serve the greater Toronto area. He met with the councils in whole and individual councillors for all the municipalities throughout greater Toronto, and he provided some recommendations to us as well.

I think that's a pretty good indication that the consultation that has taken place was pretty extensive and far-reaching, and certainly a lot of input over time.

I should point out that the individuals who carried out these studies didn't do it on an individual basis. For example, David Crombie's Who Does What panel that consulted on this issue in 1996 was made up of a variety of individuals, including Mayor Hazel McCallion, Gordon Chong who is presently a councillor in Toronto, Tom McCormack, a very well-known individual from Oakville, Steve Lowden, a respected businessman from Toronto, Enid Slack and Terry Cooke, presently the regional chairman of Hamilton-Wentworth.

I think you can see from this that there was a broad cross-section of expertise, people with a lot of knowledge who put their minds to determining just what was best for the future of the citizens of this greater Toronto area, some 4.6 million people.

1530

Following Milt Farrow's review in early 1997, we drafted the legislation. We took action that is not common practice by various governments, but is a procedure I have personally a lot of respect for, and that was to draft the legislation and then have that legislation taken out and distributed to all the municipalities, all the councillors, all the affected stakeholders, and that includes the urban development industry, the hotel association, any number of stakeholders who have an interest in ensuring that the Greater Toronto Services Board works efficiently and effectively.

We put that draft legislation out to everyone, all the stakeholders, in April 1997, not after first reading but before first reading so we could have, as a government, an opportunity to make sure that the legislation we were putting in place would suit the purposes of everybody. We did that and we received more comments, more input and more feedback from the municipalities, from the regions, from the lower-tier municipalities, from all the interested stakeholders. They all provided further input. We took that information, refined the legislation taking that input into consideration and then, and only then, did we introduce it for first reading, and that happened in June.

After first reading of the bill, we made another move that is not generally accepted government practice. We took the refined first reading bill back out to the same stakeholders, to the same municipalities, to all those councillors, to ensure there was input from every municipality, at the region, at the lower tier, by every stakeholder, by private citizens, to ensure we were going in the right direction, because there's no doubt that the creation of the Greater Toronto Services Board is a major step in the right direction. This is something that's going to affect the governance of the greater Toronto area for many years to come and the government wants to ensure that whatever we do is done right and is done properly.

Mr Alan Tonks was retained by my ministry to take that legislation out. He had over 100 meetings on that bill with various stakeholders to review the bill after first reading. It was only after that time that we felt we had sufficient input to introduce it for second reading, where it is right at this point in time.

I've talked about various individuals we have retained to review the bill and meet with stakeholders, but I'd also like to point out that I, as well, met with numerous stakeholders personally to extract their input so that I was very comfortable with the structure of the board we were recommending, that I was comfortable with the voting methods that were determined, to make sure that every municipality would feel comfortable that they had a place at the table.

I should point out that every municipality in the greater Toronto area has a seat at the table. That was one of the concerns of the rural municipalities when we first started. They felt they may not have a strong voice at the table. That's one of the changes we made during the process of getting the bill in shape to bring it in for second reading: to change the composition of the membership to make sure that every municipality in the greater Toronto area was represented.

I think we all know that, on a population basis, the city of Toronto forms about 50% of the population of the greater Toronto area, and they were concerned that the city of Toronto wouldn't be properly represented. So we developed a method of weighted voting which allows a balance of representation between the urban centre in Toronto, the suburban centre in the 905 and the rural centre in the outlying parts of the 905. It's a very well-thought-out, weighted voting system that gives everybody an opportunity to make sure that their voice is heard and that they have input into the important issues that will be facing this greater Toronto area in years to come.

As I mentioned, this is a board whose time has come. I was very pleased, when we introduced first reading, that Mr Phillips, the Liberal member from Scarborough, agreed that this was the time for this board to go on. In his view, he felt the board could be somewhat stronger, but he also agreed that we had tried to put in some balance. I think the words he used were, "This bill was designed to allow the Greater Toronto Services Board to walk before it ran." I think that's a good quote. That certainly was the intent of the government, to make sure that we put in place

procedures that would allow the board to move slowly into additional areas of responsibility. The legislation gives them that ability.

By a two-thirds majority, the board can develop strategies that would deal with very important issues like the disposal of waste, which is an issue that has been controversial in the greater Toronto area for the last two decades. Now, with the passing of this legislation and the creation of the board, we'll have an avenue that will allow for that extremely important issue to be dealt with in the best interests of all the citizens of the greater Toronto area.

Another issue that was strongly recommended that the Greater Toronto Services Board become involved in was economic development. I think all members of the House and all parties would agree that economic development is key for the proper operation of the greater Toronto area. Toronto, I believe, is the hub, the engine of the greater Toronto area; the greater Toronto area is a key component in the operation of the entire province; and of course we all recognize that a strong and prosperous Ontario is key to a strong and prosperous Canada, something which we all support. So you can see that the moves we're making here are all integrated to make sure that the rights of citizens right across this great country are protected.

We're doing it in a planned, coordinated fashion to make sure that the board, again to quote Mr Phillips, has an opportunity to walk before it runs. It may not be as strong as some people feel it should be; it's stronger than some other people feel it should be. So I think we have a balance of a Greater Toronto Services Board that should satisfy the vast majority of the stakeholders involved.

I say the vast majority because I know there are individual municipalities, there are individual regions, there are individual members of this House and there are individual members of this party who have some reservations about the direction of the Greater Toronto Services Board. Again, there are those members who feel the board is not strong enough. There are other members who feel it is too strong.

But I would urge those members to consider the absolute need for coordination of service delivery in the greater Toronto area. If they would stand back and look at the broader picture, I think they would recognize the absolute need for service to be coordinated, and the time to do that is now.

I may have failed at the beginning of my remarks to indicate that I intend to share my time with the member for Oxford and the member for Durham East. This might be an appropriate time for me to make that pass-through to the member for Oxford.

1540

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It is a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 56, the Greater Toronto Area Services Board Act. First of all, I'd like to commend the minister for his presentation on the act and what it will do for the people of the greater Toronto area and, I suppose, for his going on to assure those who have concerns with it about

what it will not do for the people of the greater Toronto area.

I want to point out that this act did not just appear as it was introduced. It had a lot of study. There have been numerous studies done, as was mentioned earlier, first of all the Golden report. Anne Golden was appointed by the previous government to prepare a study on how best to govern the area in the GTA. In fact, her report suggested that there was a great need to coordinate the services across the greater Toronto area, not just across each individual region.

The panel was reviewed by Libby Burnham again in April 1996 and came back with similar recommendations, not necessarily that there was a need to structure a regional government for the whole area, but that there was a need to coordinate services across the area.

I think it's very important to recognize that when David Crombie, as he was looking at the realignment of municipal services between the provincial and municipal governments, immediately recognized that some of those services would require some extensive coordination between the different regions in the GTA and that we would need some type of structure set up to accommodate that.

Milt Farrow was appointed to look at all the reports and to talk to all the stakeholders that would be involved with it and come back with some recommendations on how this could be implemented to serve the needs of all the participants. From that discussion, draft legislation was introduced in March 1998 for public consultation.

I want to point out that Mr Alan Tonks, the former mayor of Metropolitan Toronto, was retained to do the consultation process for the greater Toronto area and to look at how best we could implement some type of structure for that coordinated delivery of services. Of all the studies that were done over time, Mr Tonks's study perhaps included the participation of more people or more stakeholders than many of the other studies had done.

I have here a list of people and municipalities and organizations that were consulted. The list is extensive. I find it interesting that as I go over the list, members of provincial Parliament — I don't believe there is anyone not on this list who represents any area adjacent to or in the greater Toronto area, including members of both sides of the House. As I look over the list, I see they were also consulted.

It was a very intensive consultation and a very telling consultation. It became quite evident from that consultation that there were different views in the greater Toronto area of how best to provide coordination for the services that need to cross regional boundaries. I think almost exclusively the position of the municipalities or the regions that were involved was that yes, there was a great need for coordinating the services, but most, if not all, felt that it was also very appropriate that the provision of those services remain with the regional governments, that there was no specific need to have a new body that would become a governing, taxing body that would take over a portion or all of the regional services. They felt that yes, the coordination was needed, but no, it should not be a

third level of government. I think that's very important, that we don't create a third level of government. That's not to say that as time goes on and as the world changes, the services presently being provided by one level of government could not be changed to another, but I don't think any of the restructuring the provincial government has embarked upon in municipal government has been to encourage more levels of government or more politicians in the process. I think it was very evident from the consultation that the municipalities felt that a coordinating body that would have no taxing authority but would be responsible to the municipalities that elected the members of the board would be the appropriate way to set up the structure.

As was mentioned by the minister in his presentation, it was also evident that there was somewhat of a difference of opinion or there were different concerns in the more urbanized parts of the GTA and those areas that are still in agriculture and are a more rural nature in the GTA. The more rural parts of the region were concerned that as a governance model it was going to become autonomous in the more urban centres and would take away their ability to control their lifestyle and their services in the more rural parts. They felt it was very important that it become a coordinating body operated by and for the different municipalities. That's what the end result of this bill will do: It will create the greater Toronto area services board to coordinate and it will be operated by the elected officials from the other municipality.

I know there's been some concern expressed in the previous debate about the fact that they do not have the teeth in the legislation to implement what they recommend, but I think it's very important to point out that all the members of the board will be elected representatives from the municipalities. Indeed, I think municipal politicians can be counted on to make the decisions in the best interests of their community at large, not necessarily just in the community that they may be directly elected for. I think as they serve on the board, they will make coordinating decisions to the benefit of the whole region to which they are accountable and they would then proceed back to their local municipality and implement those decisions as they were put forward.

I think it's very important to recognize that the board will be made up of the regional chairs of all the regions and it will be made up of councillors from the city of Toronto. In order to recognize the difference in population between Toronto and some of the other regions, they will have extra members of their council serve on it. For a similar reason, there will be an extra representative from the city of Mississauga in order to complement the disparity of population in the different areas. In fact, the rest of the representation by population will be taken care of in the board based on the weighted vote process.

In some of the urban areas, "weighted vote" may not be a common term or a common approach to doing business. I can assure you, representing rural Ontario, that for many years quite successfully there have been counties that, because of the disparity in size of municipalities at the

lower tier, when they go to county council have the weighted vote. So a municipality that has three times the population does not necessarily have to have three times the members on the upper-tier council. In fact, they have multiple votes and their vote carries the weight of three votes as opposed to the smaller municipality which carries one. It's a very efficient and effective way of having a manageable board size and still making sure that we have a fair and honest way to adjust the authority within the board so that, as everyone is paying the bill, we have equal representation based on how much money they're expected to pay.

1550

The other area where there has been some concern, and a suggestion that there is a bit of problem with the ability of the board to operate properly because of the split between the vote, is that one municipality would have 50% of the vote and they would always be at — what shall we say? — a 50-50 split. I had the opportunity for quite a number of years to serve on an upper-tier municipality where it was structured in exactly the same way, where the lower tiers were based on a 50-50 urban-rural split. I can tell you, in all the years I served on that council, that is not the way the political representatives voted. Once you take the partisan politics that we have in this place out of the system, the members all vote based on what they believe is in the best interests of their people, and I can assure you that in municipal government that does not necessarily divide down the lines of urban-rural or, in this case, the Toronto-and-everyone-else scenario.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): No parochialism there.

Mr Hardeman: Exactly, no parochialism in rural Ontario.

It might become unmanageable, and this is particularly true in the area of finances in the service board, if on the straight 50-50 you could change the proportion of funding certain of the functions or you could decide to either perform some of those functions or not perform some of those functions. If you based that on the straight 50-50 vote, strictly the majority rules, there may be times when that could create some difficult situations.

The bill accounts for that. For certain areas of changing jurisdiction or changing the proportion of funding for the services they are providing, it would require a two-thirds vote to change those. The bill goes to great lengths to make sure that those things are looked after.

As I mentioned earlier, there is no ability for the board to tax any of its members. The only ability to collect funding would be at the discretion of the participating municipalities, save and except that the cost of their operation will be billed to the municipalities proportionately as their assessment would relate. It's also very important to recognize that the bill points out the need to re-evaluate the proportion of the board from time to time. So if the census suggests that the population in one area is growing dramatically more than in another, over a period of time you would not have an inappropriately functioning board. The adjustments would be made in the weighted vote

scenario to make sure that everyone was getting equal say for their pay.

It's also important to realize that beyond the coordinating activities of the board, they will also become responsible through the transit authority for the operation of GO Transit. As we've talked about the GTA area in the bill, we recognize that only for GO Transit purposes is the region of Hamilton-Wentworth part of the GTA scenario. For that reason the region of Hamilton-Wentworth will have a member on the Greater Toronto Services Board but will only be voting on issues that deal with GO Transit. As it relates to their portion of the GO Transit, that vote would be weighted in order to have more than one vote because of the size of the region of Hamilton-Wentworth. But they would only be involved with the board as it relates to transit.

I would point out that in terms of the ability of the transit to be expanded, as with all other services, it's the vote of the majority of the board to recommend such expansions and if they have the required support, then those services can be expanded, again, with the participation of those municipalities to which those services would be expanded. It provides the opportunity for local government to make the decisions on how best to provide local government services.

I think it's very important that we do not lose sight of the fact that the government has the responsibility to put the legislation in place for this coordinating purpose, but the function of that will be done by locally elected officials to provide the services that their local people require.

I could go on, but I will at this point turn it over to the member for Durham East. He has some comments he would like to make on the bill.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's certainly a privilege. I thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for giving me the opportunity to express my views on this very important issue with respect to the residents of Durham, whom I represent.

This debate is not new. I think it's important to put it in context. In my research, I can trace for you, without boring you, that this government and all previous Progressive Conservative governments, beginning with Leslie Frost in 1950, are responsible for the structure and governance models that we have in this great province of Ontario today. If you think back and look at January 16, 1950, when Leslie Frost met then with the 13 municipalities that made up Toronto, and where we are today, all of the changes between 1950 and 1996-97 were made by a Progressive Conservative government for the right reasons: to provide good governance and good leadership and government with vision for the province of Ontario.

That's really what we have before us today. Without going through too much chronology, I want to share with you in my research the history of how we got to this very important piece of legislation, Bill 56.

I was first elected to regional council — actually, I was first elected in 1982 as a school trustee, but I always kept an important eye on my community and watched through a role as a councillor and as a regional councillor the

important events of the day. Those important events on this issue, the Greater Toronto Services Board or GTA, were first started, I might add, by the Liberal government. They had a report. At that time the Deputy Minister I think was Liz McLaren for the greater Toronto area. The report was called GTA 2021 — The Challenge of our Future: A Working Document, a study that was reported to the House in March 1992.

The next report was done by the same sort of group, which was the Office for the Greater Toronto Area, which set up by the previous government, the NDP government. They set up a report, *Shaping Growth in the GTA*. That report was tabled in September 1992.

The purpose of this background is very important. It's one thing to study. The most difficult thing is to govern with leadership and courage. That's the central theme here: The importance of governance with leadership and courage; the courage to follow through on the studies of the professionals and the consultants who are employed and the taxpayer of Ontario pays for.

I'm going to go back further and say that even in our document to be elected in June 1995, there's a lot of background, deliberate recognition that governance, the amount of money — we coined a phrase that we were overgoverned and overregulated. I don't think there's one taxpayer today who would disagree that that was the case, and this government has made significant changes in the governance. There's been a great of reluctance and there's a great deal of trying to delay any implementation of change.

1600

The previous government started off by appointing the Golden commission, which is the next study. These are all studies, these are all background that our Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Honourable Al Leach, has continued relentlessly with. He brought to task the Golden commission, which reported in January 1996, again serving as a reference document, refining it from the earlier late-1980 report by the office for the greater Toronto area, much of it focusing on the coordination role, their need to recognize the governance and coordination.

All the speakers have made reference, but I've gone to the trouble of actually reading these. Even before I got to this House, I knew, looking forward, that we had to have less governance and less bureaucracy so you could get through the layers of making change. There was the *Moving Forward Together* report, known as the four mayors' report, which was part of the discussion that the ministry and I received by Mayor Hazel McCallion, Mel Lastman, then-mayor of the city of North York, Mayor Nancy Diamond from the city of Oshawa and Mayor Barbara Hall from the city of Toronto, filed in January 1996. Their position was that they could stand on their own — of course, they were the largest: Peel, North York, Oshawa and the city of Toronto — because they had the assessment base, the growth and the wealth. What this coordination is about is being able to share the strengths within an economic region. Arguably that region is the GTA.

How do I translate that vision? It doesn't take very much science, technically. I drive every single day to this House. I leave my house at 6 o'clock in the morning, around that time, and I see my constituents driving west-bound on the 401 or getting off to take the GO Transit, and I encourage the expansion of GO Transit to help my constituents who live in Durham and work in Toronto. That's the reality. The reality is that as I get into Pickering and Ajax, you can barely tell where the boundaries of Toronto start and Durham region ends.

That report, *Moving Forward Together*, was received, and it had its own particular persuasion. Then the minister wanted to refine the analysis. Really what he did was he set up an excellent small committee, which was the Libby Burnham committee. In fact, Libby Burnham — Walter Beath was the first regional chair of Durham, appointed during the Davis government, remember? It was only a Progressive Conservative government that ever had the courage to make significant change. Is it perfect? We will ensure that we work with the change agents to move forward. As far as having a political war, we leave that to the opposition and the third party.

The third member of that was Ron Starr, who, as the minister said earlier in his comments, was an eminently qualified member of that panel who listened. I attended presentations in Durham and I think they did a fine job of commenting on the differences in the regions. Whether it's Halton or Durham or Peel or York, they all have differences. Arguably, the point they made in their report was that some regions were more mature than others. Obviously I would support that observation.

There are other reports: the six mayors' report called *Change for the Better*, and that was the mayor of Scarborough, Frank Faubert; Doug Holyday of Etobicoke — this was prior to the new city of Toronto. The six mayors had their report, and there were further reports. As the minister has mentioned, there was the Milt Farrow report, the Crombie report and also the minister's latest report, which finally was the Alan Tonks report, I guess, which really served as the basis for the legislation we're talking about, Bill 56.

I've given you a bit of chronology of how this bill got here. First it took the courage of this government to bring in Bill 56, and Bill 56 was introduced in June 1998. A considerable amount of consultation has occurred in that whole process. But the difficulty for me is I want clear assurance that the rural portion of Durham region, as mentioned in the Golden report as well as the Burnham report, must have special consideration. That's absolutely critical. At the same time, the dilemma, why I may appear to be sitting on the fence, I want clear opting-out provisions.

To satisfy my need to support this particular bill, I need to be assured by the minister — and I can assure you he does listen. I respect both the Premier and the minister in this government. We are listening and we are able to respond to any kind of opportunity. I would say that the thing I need to see is some clarification in a certain section

of the bill for an opting-out provision, and this was mentioned by previous speakers.

"33(1) The board shall conduct, before December 31, 2000, a review of the following:

"1. The board's size and composition.

"2. The number of votes each member of the board has

"3. The powers which have been or should, in the opinion of the board, be assigned to it.

"4. Whether this act should be amended so that the board's powers no longer extend to a municipality and so that the members of the board no longer include a representative of the municipality."

Arguably, that could be an opting-out provision. I'm looking at the minister as I speak at this moment.

The other thing I need to see is some strengthening of a mandate for the GTSB to examine the options and the importance for the rural component: the rural component of the greater Toronto area, arguably Durham, the second-largest industry in Durham next to the auto sector, very important. In fact, my riding of Durham East is really the rural section of Durham. That's why I've got to stand up and respond to my constituents. It's absolutely essential that the message I'm leaving on the record of Hansard today is that I need to have protection for the rural environment and I need to have some provisions for the regions to re-examine them and their own boundaries. I have to see amendments to this bill to be supportive of the bill.

That being said, I could repeat that time after time, through resolution after resolution, members of all parties say, "First there's a requirement to coordinate services." Every single report that I've referred to has made continuous reference to the need to coordinate services through the GTA. Other reports have asked the various regions to define themselves. I think the member for Dovercourt specifically in the Hansard record yesterday suggested that he would like to see the regions restructure themselves. They won't restructure themselves until they're forced to. This whole process between now and 2000, they're going to have to decide their future.

The people of the GTA pay very close attention. The minister is making important change. Think back to 1950 when Leslie Frost made important changes in government. This is the next government that's about to make those changes. These are historic times. It's time to pay attention and it's time to act. I'm listening, Minister. I want to see important amendments to this legislation in order to support it. Thank you very much for my time this afternoon.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I must comment that the member for Durham East really expressed the concerns that we have when legislation and motions like these are put forward. What we are talking about is time allocation, restricting one's time to express one's views. I'm so happy that they allowed him to express his views at the last minute because he's saying he has tremendous concerns about this bill that is put forward.

He went beyond Bill 56 and the Greater Toronto Services Board to express some concern also about the amalgamation process of this government when they rammed through that bill in such haste and without much consultation. Listening to the member for Durham East brings very much to light that when we have democracy, when we have debate and when we have a Legislature where people come forward to represent the people of Ontario, who come with a different view, we want the time to be heard.

Let me just go back to put it into perspective so that the folks out there who are listening and watching will understand what this is all about. We should be debating Bill 56, the Greater Toronto Services Board Act. But, oh no, we are debating the fact that this government will restrict the time for us to do a proper debate on this.

1610

Let me first look at the bill itself and tell you exactly what the statements are all about. I will first express what the bill is and then express the concerns we have in that regard. The minister referred to the section in the standing orders or the procedures on how we do our business in the House. It is a standing order which is not of great concern to the people out there, but just as a matter of record it is standing order 46.

Then he said "and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 56," — meaning you have no concern; this one is the power one — "An Act to establish the Greater Toronto Services Board and the Greater Toronto Transit Authority and to amend the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority Act," and they say that whenever they call this bill, which is Bill 56, before the House, the Speaker, having been vested with the power, "shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on general government."

What it is saying, Mr Speaker, and you know it and the people should understand it, is that they want to do this without any of the procedures of the normal democratic process of debate, that as soon as a certain time has come about, that's it: "We are the government. We lay our iron hand down and that's the end of it all," regardless of what we want to amend, regardless of what we want to say. Even their own member for Durham East is saying, "I have some concerns," but he's running out of time.

Who put the time constraint on that? The Harris government, which through its mandate continually has acted like a bully through the process, ramming things through.

This is one of the typical ones: The government rammed through a bill amalgamating greater Toronto. Here we are and we haven't been given an opportunity to put our point of view forward to the government about the manner in which they did the amalgamation process. It's an opportunity now to revisit that — in quite an awkward way. The fact is that with this bill establishing the Greater Toronto Services Board, it's an opportunity to say, "Here is what's going to be managed."

We have expressed that what they're going to manage is going to be quite a nightmare. There are certain things that have not yet even been debated and discussed. There are people who have shown concern. They've had some very good individuals who put forward some recommendations about amalgamation.

Anne Golden, quite respected, put forward great recommendations, very good recommendations. David Crombie is a very well respected individual and former cabinet minister, former mayor of the city of Toronto, someone who, although from the Conservative Party, has been quite respected by the Liberal Party and other people outside. They put forward excellent recommendations in the first place. Did this government listen? No. They did not listen to all the recommendations put forward. They would take one or two and say, "We have listened very well." They expressed some concern that these recommendations should be adhered to, but they did not do that.

Bill 56 falls very short of the reforms that David Crombie put forward in his Who Does What panel review. Crombie actually tied support for Toronto amalgamation to significant restructuring of municipal governance across the GTA.

If they really had supported the Crombie recommendations, Bill 56 would look very different today. But oh, no, they know it all. They are the ones who feel they have been elected by the people, have all the thinking of the people, and would just ram things through without listening. Even though they were spending all those funds and money on David Crombie, who came up with great recommendations, they did not listen. Bill 56 falls short of the original reform plans promised by the Harris government two years ago.

One then has to start thinking, what is the real support for this initiative by the Harris government? This government, as I said, rammed through the amalgamation of Toronto a few months ago. As you know, this city that we have created today, the greater city, has four million people. Many cities were there with mayors before. Many things have to be looked at, to find out how we will manage them.

I'll name one, for an example, a concern in the city of Scarborough, where I'm from, Scarborough North. They were concerned that maybe it's a good idea to amalgamate this city; maybe some of the good things that are happening in other cities may happen, things like in North York, that collected garbage twice a week. Maybe Scarborough would collect its garbage twice a week. Or is it North York that may be referring to the point: "Will this amalgamation make us lose our garbage collection twice a week? Maybe all the cities will have once a week."

The concern is, if we reduce the garbage collection to once a week in North York, "Maybe my taxes will drop." In Scarborough we say, "If garbage collection is twice a week, my taxes will go up." These are concerns to look at. It's rather simple. It's a matter of costs; it's a matter of how we administer this process. Many of these things had to be looked at. This government was in such a hurry to amalgamate greater Toronto that they did not look at some

of those details and give those people time to find solutions and address some sort of resolution of these matters.

Another area of great concern was transit, which is one of the biggest issues today, whether GO Transit or the TTC. We all know that the TTC, which is a very efficient system, which is totally funded by Toronto, has many riders. Now we start dividing them into the 416 area and the 905 area. Many thousands of people from the 905 area who come down here use that system. Of course I think it's wonderful that they use that system, but again it is Toronto that bears the entire expense, the entire cost of that. If we are going to amalgamate all that and have the Greater Toronto Services Board here, we're going to have to start to look at costs: Who shall pay for all that? Will Toronto continue to pay that cost?

On another aspect of GO Transit, we know the figure that is used is 15% of the people within the city of Toronto use GO Transit and the rest come from outside the transit area. We are paying the bulk of that. Has that been resolved? No, that has not been resolved, but in the haste with which this government went ahead to amalgamate the cities — which could be a good idea, if it was done properly, but now we have a board that will have to look at some of those issues. I don't see how it could be done without great debate. Even the representation on the Greater Toronto Services Board is in some question, because the representation seems to be on a 50-50 basis, where there are more people coming from outside Toronto who will be on the board than people within Toronto. It's a great concern. They're going to make decisions about Toronto.

We continue to say that if you're going to rush this thing through, you will make lots of mistakes. You have made mistakes before and you're doing it again.

Closure on these debates is something I feel very strongly against. In a democratic society, the opportunity is given to each of us here in this Parliament of coming here and representing the people of Ontario. When we come to represent out people, we want their concerns to be heard. When we get here to express our concerns and the concerns of our constituents, we are then shut down by this government in a very dictatorial manner which is completely against the democratic process.

1620

Although we in the opposition from time to time have complained over and over about the fact that you should not be going in that direction, we're quite patient about that and the people outside are quite patient too. If you have a government that does not listen, what will happen sooner or later is that when you go to the polls, then I presume the people will make their decision. I think that's the good thing about democracy. If they had the right, if they had that power and they felt they had that power, the Harris government would cancel the election in the coming year because they would feel: "We have it right. We don't have to listen to the people. We'll go forward. No matter what we say, no matter what we do, the fact is that we are right." But when the election comes, maybe that will be adjusted.

Another area of great concern, and I have expressed this very much — I don't see how it could be settled that easily unless we have people sitting down in the long term, finding out how it will be resolved, how the financing could be done — is the matter of housing. The housing situation in our city has come to a point now where we have seen the CMHC survey that came out to state that we have the lowest vacancy rate in this province since 1990. The fact is that in 1995, when this government took over, the vacancy rate was still dropping. They did not see it in any way as a sign that their policy was not working. What this government did was add fire to all the fury. It immediately took a decision — I presume it was one of their first decisions in the Legislature here — to cut the poorest of poor, those people who need the support of the government. That's why we have government: to help the most vulnerable in our society, those who are on the edge in many ways, whether it's feeding themselves or having affordable housing or clothing for their children. The first decision this government made was to cut 22% from their incomes, and it felt very much like abuse, telling them that they are just squatters and abusers of the system.

I understand that the Premier in his remarks today was throwing insults at the minister for employment insurance, asking how dare that minister cut it, that this is the people's money. Let me remind the minister and the Premier and the Conservative government that the money you were giving to those on welfare was their money too. It was taxes that you collected for a time to help those who are in need. I don't know where you get off saying the federal government picks up the money to give it to employment insurance, and when you take the money up for social assistance or welfare, you feel it's not theirs.

I know you are wondering, Mr Speaker, what the relevance is to this. It has so much relevance to how the government has put the residents of Toronto and across the province in a position that they can't afford housing and then turned around to the city and said, "We will download housing on to you." All these issues have to be debated, so you see the relevance here. It is very important to know how you are going to pass on and download the responsibility to a group of individuals without any funds, but you fixed it after you created the crisis yourself. You have caused the poor to be poorer and then said that this will happen.

We hope that the Greater Toronto Services Board will be able to solve that. I would say it will not solve it. The evidence is all over the place. We have seen the evidence. The Minister of Housing has downloaded the responsibility to the Minister of Community and Social Services and also to the Minister of Health. That means there is no concern about housing.

But we have a concern about homelessness in this city that is growing. A greater number of people are homeless. The evidence is all over the place. The evidence is on the sidewalks everywhere, a city that is fast decaying because of the policies of this government: the policy and direction of ramming things through, a direction that when we want to debate and bring these things together about closure, we

are shut down; conditions where they do not listen at all, where constituents of mine would like to come forward to the minister and to the committee and say their concerns, groups that are fighting the cause of the poor because this government just ignores them and feels that they are somehow impediments to their policy.

In his opening comments for this, the minister talked about the great engine of this province called Toronto. He calls it the hub, the key to success — these are words that he has been using — of how Ontario's prosperity goes on.

Minister, what is happening now is that our greatest resources and some of the people who would use their potential to enhance this province, to enhance this city, are being dumped upon and ignored. It will be considered that we can listen to those who have money and those who are on Bay Street. But those individuals who need access to the training, those who need access to affordable housing, those who need all the support and help so they can contribute to what we call the greater city, the greater Ontario, of course are being ignored.

We have great resources here; I have no doubt about that. The challenge and the opportunity we have are that the diversity of our city speaks for itself: the diversity of the many cultures; the diversity of the many languages; the diversity of a good, educated society. The situation here is that as soon as we ignore those resources, the responsibility becomes greater.

There was a wonderful commercial which becomes reality at times. I think it was —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): A government commercial?

Mr Curling: It wasn't one of those government commercials where they spent about \$40 million to get their message out.

Interjection: Forty-seven.

Mr Curling: My colleague corrected me that it's \$47 million spent to promote their propaganda.

The commercial went like this: I think it's about a transmission and it stated, "Pay me now or pay me later." If you don't fix what is happening right now, later on you'll pay a higher price.

Some of the concerns we have about the ways the citizens of this city and across the province have been treated will cost us a lot more, a tremendous amount more. We'll be paying much more for this — lots more. In saying we've put a body in place and saying, "They will fix it," what you have done is ignored the situation now. You have totally ignored some of the concerns we have in the city, especially for those who have an affordability problem; totally those who want some training; totally those who would like English-as-a-second-language programs to be promoted so that they can enhance and make a better contribution to the economy of this province.

I am appalled but not at all surprised at the direction this government is going. It is consistent with the way they behave. It's consistent with the way they feel they have it right. It's consistent with the way they have shut down many of the debates in this House. It's consistent with the way this Conservative, right-wing Reform agenda is

behaving. As a matter of fact, it's to the delight to the Reform Party. I heard Preston Manning saying the other day: "We won't wait for them to ask us to come in. We're just going to go in and take it over." That's why Tony Clement spent so much time —

Mr Bradley: They have taken it over.

Mr Curling: They have taken over the Conservative Party. They like what Mr Harris is doing because they have an agenda just for the few, not for all.

Government is about governing all people, about listening to all people. The fact is that this government is not interested in listening to all. Even their own backbencher from Durham East is complaining that he has great concerns about this legislation, and they continue. As a matter of fact, I have great respect for a member who will stand up and say, "I want some other things addressed in this." We identify many of those concerns.

1630

Mr Bradley: Sam Cureatz always said that.

Mr Curling: As he says, Sam Cureatz from Durham used to say the same thing too, but I presume they couldn't rein him in long enough and he got fed up and left. We won't go away. The Liberal Party is here to stay. We are concerned about democracy, and I applaud the member for Durham East for continuing with that. Any time you feel that you're not being supported enough, you can come over here and we'll give you that support. You can stay right there, we'll give you the support from here, to be concerned about the direction this minister and this government are going in with this kind of legislation, about the dictatorial manner and the direction in which they are going. I applaud you very much.

I want to continue to make comments about what they have done in regard to housing in that respect. The Minister of Housing — today he is the Minister of Housing. For many days he would not answer any questions; he abdicated responsibility to someone else. I was very proud that he took on the answers to questions today. He took it because his boss asked him to speak on it. When he spoke in response to rent control, he stood up and said that the rent control protection act would protect tenants. What the minister didn't realize was that he killed the Rent Control Act. He buried it altogether.

There's an old saying back in my country that sometimes people are given a basket to carry water. What he has said to the tenants is: "The legislation that protects you is empty. The only protection we're going to give you is if you stay a prisoner within your house. If you ever dare to move outside your rental accommodation, we will slap you with as high a rent as possible and we'll no longer protect you." What sort of government is this? What sort of government would see individuals who should be protected by them at all times, yet they find out, "If you move, we'll hand you over to the big landlords, and they can charge as high a rent as possible"?

The fact is that the Liberal Party's policy towards housing was very much concerned, completely concerned with how this government handled itself. If they could take a page out of the Liberal government's —

Hon Mr Leach: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You've been very lenient with members of the Legislature on varying and drifting off the purpose of the bill. I appreciate that and I think all members of the House appreciate that. But the member is deviating completely from the bill that's on the floor, a time allocation bill which has absolutely nothing to do with the subject the member is dealing with.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): This is where the judgment of the Speaker is called for. I've been very tolerant; I totally agree with you. I try to be fair with everyone. Maybe it's the right time for me to bring to your attention and to the attention of others that you should debate the issue, which is motion number 43. I hope you understood what I said.

Mr Curling: Mr Speaker, I respect your judgment and I respect your ruling on this. My point of view on this bill about shutting us down from speaking — that's what it's all about: closure on a debate that we want to speak on. Closure, bullying, dictatorship, that's what it's about. If you want to say to me that I should address that solely, yes. The people out there are saying to you: "Don't shut us down. Don't be the bully. Don't be the kind of government that feels you know it all on this one-tier government situation that you want to enforce. We're saying to you that we have a voice. We have something to say."

I know, Mr Minister, that you don't understand what the people out there want. You have determined already what you want and what your government wants and therefore you say, "We can shut down this debate any time."

Mr Bradley: And head to the Albany Club.

Mr Curling: Yes. In the meantime, of course, I presume you have some sort of agenda outside. You'd like to go to the Albany Club because your fellows and your colleagues are awaiting you there. When you go down the road to the Albany Club, because you want to shut this debate down, because that's what it's all about, there are people out there who are not heading to the Albany Club. They are homeless. There are people out there who don't want to go to the Albany Club because they've been cut off and they can't feed their kids. They don't want to go to the Albany Club.

If you want to leave, if any of the members of the Conservative Party want to head down to the Albany Club because they've cut the debating time, they can go, because there is an alternative. The alternative is the Liberal Party and Dalton McGuinty, who will then manage this and govern for all the people, not for the few. It's a Liberal government, with Dalton McGuinty, that will have ministers who are responsible, who will make sure that we don't shut down debate and have closure to debate, because that's what it's all about, Mr Minister.

That's what it's all about, Mr Speaker. I'm so glad the Speaker is here to umpire and referee the situation.

We are talking about closure, about shutting us up. I know you don't want to hear what I've got to say and I know it's very difficult for you. It's only a matter of time, you would say in your speech, "Just a matter of time and

they will all be gone," because you have introduced legislation to say, "We put time allocation to their speaking. We put time allocation to their comments and their contribution to the debate. We will shut them down as fast as possible." It's very difficult to hear.

The truth sometimes hurts. As a matter of fact, for those who don't want to hear the truth, the government will close their eyes. Some of the issues and the services that are to be done by the city, they don't want to hear that. "We just want to ram it through and look glitzy, and the only way we can look glitzy is to spend \$47 million on propaganda."

The young people I speak to in my riding of Scarborough North are saying to me: "I understand that they don't have much money in the government any more for the services in our city. I wonder if they could put back the \$1 billion that was taken out of education and help with not closing our schools." That's what grade 6 and grade 5 told me. They were here today from Percy Williams. They asked me, "Could we take the money that the Premier stated is not there and put it back so we could have our school?" But, no.

They spent \$47 million to push their propaganda. As the Premier said today: "We have to shut this down quickly. We have to get the glitz out. We've got to make sure that it is flashing out there and make sure that we have a commercial here. We've got to make Dalton McGuinty look bad because he's looking too good. If he's looking that good, we've got to put question marks around him." They don't want to have questions about that. They want to look good.

The fact is you cannot shut us down. You may try to shut us down inside the Legislature, you may shut us down in committee hearings, but you won't shut the people outside down for what you're all about. You'll never shut them down, because the fact is they know what is the truth and they want their services. It's their taxpayers' money. As the Conservative Party always says, there's only one taxpayer, and that one taxpayer is not happy about the way they are being governed, the dictatorial way you handle debates, the way you handle the situation here.

I know my other colleague wants to speak. I saw him all ready. He wants to make his contribution, but I must make a couple of more points here before I sit down.

This one-tier government cannot go on like this. You see, it's a democracy, and I've got to emphasize that. It won't come home to you. It will come home the day you go to the election polls and the people have rejected you. They will say to you that they want their voice to be heard.

1640

The individuals in our city — it's a great city. It's a great city of cultural diversity. It's a great city of educational diversity, where people are quite educated but they're not given the opportunity, because this government is only concerned about Bay Street, not Main Street. They're just concerned that wealth will trickle down from the table, the big fat feast you have there, that if we

ourselves eat and we get big and fat, some of the food will be left over and will come down to the poor.

We see it differently. We feel, as the Liberal Party, that it's those most vulnerable who must be helped, because we know your Bay Street colleagues down the road there can feed themselves, they can find accommodation, they can find transportation, all those services that must be provided for all the people within the greater city. But we also feel that those who are using it should also serve and pay towards that.

We are concerned about the structure of this, but we will vote on this and I will vote for this bill. We will vote against closure on this but we understand the direction in which you're going with the Greater Toronto Services Board and putting that into place.

I want to thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make those comments.

Mr Bradley: I'm sorry that I have to speak this afternoon on yet another time allocation motion. For those who are at home who may not know the intricate rules of the Ontario Legislature, a time allocation motion is a motion which closes off debate, shuts down debate in the Ontario Legislature. This government has almost two a week now, it seems to me, of time allocation motions shutting down debate on important subjects of the day. That has become the style of this government. It is a bulldozer-type government. It's a wrecking crew that gets in there, a demolition derby group that we have in power, and that is the way they're going to move forward.

In fact, people are concerned about it. You would think they wouldn't worry about procedures in the Legislature. I get calls all the time from people who are saying: "What does a time allocation motion mean? Because every day, instead of debating legislation, you people appear to be debating closure motions, procedural motions." I have to explain to them, "Mike Harris's office gives the orders and says, 'We've had enough debate; it's embarrassing to hear the arguments put forward against this legislation,'" no matter what that legislation is. "Shut the debate down." They want it to be like cabinet, where Iron Mike just puts his fist down on the table and that's the way it is, the argument is over.

You know what this time allocation reminds me of? It reminds me of the time allocation motion we had where we wanted more debate on video lottery terminals. Remember the expansion of gambling in this province? I think all members will remember that very much. The member for Etobicoke-Humber knows that. We had the time allocation motion that was brought forward because the government wanted to put video lottery terminals in every bar and every restaurant in every neighbourhood of every village, town and city in Ontario so that they could be bleeding money from the most desperate, the addicted people, the most vulnerable people in society to fill the coffers of the government, because they had already given a tax break through their tax scheme to help the rich people in the province. The wealthiest people in the province did best by that income tax cut. So they had to bleed

it somewhere else and they wanted to take it out of very vulnerable people in our society.

Then, of course, they got a lot of criticism. Even some of the government backbenchers said: "Look, we're getting all kinds of flak. We go to church on Sunday morning and there's a petition in the church saying we shouldn't have gambling expansion in this province." I don't blame those people for feeling that. They went to the ministers.

Every day I'd be up asking questions in the House and making statements and speeches and issuing press releases. Finally, the government sounded the bugles of retreat. You could hear the "beep, beep, beep" as they were backing up on the issue, because there was a firestorm in the province against the gambling expansion that was taking place. I remember that time allocation motion when they tried to push that bill through and close off debate.

Members of the House should know that even today, through the back door, the government is trying to put in more slot machines. In Clinton, Ontario, tonight there's a major meeting taking place where they have an internationally renowned expert, a professor from the US who has been in many jurisdictions.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): From the US? Jim, you're not bringing in people from the US, are you?

Mr Bradley: The reason they brought the person in from the US, since the member for Etobicoke-Humber asks, is that they know this government listens to the US all the time, that all the ideas they seem to get are from the Republican Party south of the border. In fact, the member would know now, maybe they've told him, they've brought in Mike Murphy. You know who Mike Murphy is. Mike Murphy is the guru, the advertising expert from the US. He ran the advertising campaign for Senator Jesse Helms, who can never be considered a friend of Canada, and Ollie North is a second person he ran a campaign for. His expertise is on negative advertising, the kind of thing we saw south of the border that even Americans who are used to it started to recoil at, this negative advertising.

Of course we've seen some of it in Ontario. We don't even have an election campaign on and they're running ads against the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Liberal Party, Dalton McGuinty, ads spoiling the football game. You try to watch a football game and you've got Conservative government ads on all the time. People are concerned about that. They say, "Are these people that desperate?"

Here's the other theory they have, because I know my friend from Humber always wants to know what the theory is. The theory is that the Conservative Party — we're not talking about all the government advertising paid for out of the pockets of the taxpayers, closing in on \$50 million, the self-serving advertising; we're not talking about that. We're talking now about the one set of Conservative ads. They said, "The Conservatives have so much money in their coffers from all of the fundraisers they're having in the province that they have to spend it before the election campaign," because as my friend the

member from St George knows, even with the new limits you've put out there — the sky's the limit in some areas — there are still limits on how much a political party or a candidate can spend in a campaign.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): The same as the federal Liberals. You know that.

Mr Bradley: Of course, as the former Mulroney staffer —

Hon Mr Wilson: No, as the guy with the backbone to stand up to the Liberal government.

Mr Bradley: The member for — what is the riding? Simcoe East? No, it's not east; it's Simcoe Centre or the member for Simcoe West — wherever he is. Anyway, he's the former Minister of Health and now Minister of Energy. As he says, people should know, he's very proud of this — I'm not saying this in a disparaging way, but he was once a staffer for a Conservative cabinet minister, so he knows about these things. He's been in government, not just as a member, he's had that previous experience. He knows they have so much money now in the Conservative coffers that they have to spend it ahead of the election campaign itself. Thus we have the ads coming out.

I don't know if the member from Humber agrees with me on that, but that's the theory I've heard from some people, that you have to spend that.

Mr Ford: Oh, you heard from some people.

Mr Bradley: These are Conservatives who said this to me, good Conservative friends of mine.

Mr Ford: That is hearsay information, Jim. You heard something.

Mr Bradley: I well remember, and you will remember the time allocation motion we're talking about, which was brought in to ram through the new gambling expansion. Everywhere in Ontario you turn around now, there's a new set of slot machines coming up in Ontario. In Clinton, Ontario, in southwestern Ontario tonight, there is a battle going on. Of course, the forces of the government —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: No, I didn't say "evil." Somebody over at the other side who I won't identify said "evil," but I wouldn't say that, and it wasn't Terry Milewski — said the "forces of evil." I'm saying the forces of the government, the Ontario Lottery Corp, the agents of Mike Harris, are there on one side, trying to shove these slot machines into the lovely town of Clinton, and on the other side —

Hon Mr Leach: The time allocation motion.

Mr Bradley: I'm talking about a previous time allocation motion.

On the other side are the forces of good, trying to prevent Mike Harris, who you will remember — I know the member for Mississauga West remembers this well. When the Premier was in Windsor he said: "I don't want any part of those funds that you derive from gambling, don't want any part of them. Please, let's not have those."

Now he's addicted to them. What do you call those things they put in your arm at the hospital?

1650

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Intravenous.

Mr Bradley: Intravenous. It's as though he's hooked on intravenous with gambling revenues. For the lifeblood of his government he's got to have these gambling revenues.

I know that the family coalition caucus within the government, the family values folks out there, must be putting the pressure on him, saying, "Look, we thought we closed down this opportunity to put 44 Mike Harris gambling halls in Ontario, so-called charity casinos, yet we see them showing up everywhere."

They've now made racetracks into casinos. What the racetracks need, of course, is for the government to take its hand out of their pockets and allow them to keep more of the profits from the horse racing industry itself. Then they could be viable. But now, everywhere in Ontario they're setting up new casinos. There are people now who say, "It's not the racetrack we'll be going to any more, it's going to be the casino we go to." It'll distract from a very legitimate industry in this province, a good industry in this province, that of the raising and breeding of horses and the racing of horses.

That was previously a time allocation motion, I want to tell my friend from St George who was wondering how I was getting around to speaking on this particular time allocation motion.

Or I thought this afternoon, instead of a time allocation motion, we would be talking about new user fees in the field of health care. I was speaking to some officials who are involved in collective bargaining with their company, a private sector company. They said that what you have to look out for now is that hospitals are charging more for semi-private and private accommodation in the hospitals, and for certain physiotherapy the Workers' Compensation Board — I still call it that — would pay a certain amount and the hospitals would accept that. No longer so. Now there's a user fee on top of that.

What does that do to collective bargaining? That forces those involved in collective bargaining to go back to the company to demand, to make the request, as part of their package, for more in order that they can cover that. In other words, the insurance premium goes up for the company. The company becomes less competitive.

I thought this government was all about making companies competitive. I know my friend the minister of industry and tourism, and many other things, economic development, when he was in St Catharines giving a non-partisan speech at the Premier's conference — I think it was non-partisan; I read in the paper it wasn't — said, "We want to get out of the hair of business." Now, of course, business is going to be placed in a less competitive mode because the government is now demanding that the union people go back and negotiate this instead of it being paid as it always has been through the Ontario health insurance plan.

Or I thought this afternoon the Minister of Health might be making an announcement, that instead of having this

debate, perhaps she'd be up in the House saying that we're going to now fund the PSA test, the prostate specific antigen test, which tries to detect prostate cancer.

People have to pay for that at the present time. There are a lot of other diagnostic tests that they don't have to pay for, and I'm glad of that, but this is one that's a worry to men in our society. The older men get in our society, the greater the chance that they are going to unfortunately end up with prostate cancer. It is said that if you're 90 years old, for instance, you probably have it and you'll die of something other than it because you're 90 years old.

I'm not saying the test is perfect and I know there is some division within the medical community on it, but I'll tell you, there are a lot of people out there who are delighted, not at the fact that they have prostate cancer but that somebody suggested they get this test, or the doctor ordered this test so they would be able to identify it early and get the kind of treatment that would confine it and perhaps even cure it in that person. I would hope that this government would do that. That's certainly something I would be very much in favour of and I'd be the first to compliment the government if that were done.

Or this afternoon I thought that when we were talking about the greater Toronto services area we might be talking about Highway 407. I see the minister in charge of privatization. He hasn't been all that busy; I'm glad of that.

We talked about Highway 407. Did he see, and this would be interesting to this particular Speaker, what the CAA had to say, what the Ontario Motor League or the CAA had to say — that's now the Canadian Automobile Association — about Highway 407? They're afraid that, like so many things in Ontario, there is going to be one road for the rich and one road for the rest. They're afraid that if you are going to have huge tolls on Highway 407, Conrad Black's chauffeur will be able to pay those tolls as he goes along Highway 407, but the average person out there may find it somewhat onerous to pay that cost to avoid the huge traffic congestion that we have north of Toronto. I thought we might be dealing with that this afternoon.

We're talking about the Greater Toronto Services Board and we're talking about a time allocation motion. I thought, again, a more productive way of spending the afternoon would be to talk about school closings. The government threw some money at it and changed the formula a bit for one year, but I know the people who are before the board of education representing Merritton High School in St Catharines are very perturbed that a school which has provided so much service and has been the home of so many secondary school students over the years, which has such tradition, could be closed down as a result of the funding formula that will eventually be applied — there's a one-year stay of execution — to boards of education.

You and I know, Mr Speaker, as do I think all members of the House, that a school is not simply used by those who are involved in direct education during the day. It's almost a community centre. Most schools are a community

centre, utilized in the evening and on weekends in various different ways. Particularly in smaller communities, it is exceedingly important. So I thought we might have been talking about that.

I thought, when I saw the Minister of Housing here this afternoon — and Municipal Affairs — that he would be talking about rent control.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: It is; it's the same person. I thought he would be talking about how he has removed rent control in the province.

Hon Mr Leach: Just like Superman.

Mr Bradley: Yes, he has. "Just like Superman," says the minister. He has removed rent control.

Now, if he wanted to address a problem that landlords had, it wasn't how much they were obtaining for rents. It was good, solid landlords, your smaller landlords who have tenants who destroy the property and who don't pay the rent. They are the people I think all members in this House will be very sympathetic to. I know the minister mentions there are some provisions, but I'm telling you, the problems are ongoing. While the huge landlords in Metropolitan Toronto, the Barnicks of this world — is Barnicke a —

Hon Mr Leach: He's not a landlord.

Hon Mr Wilson: Real estate agent.

Mr Bradley: Real estate agent. Well, he builds them. I stand corrected. I'm glad that Jim's here this afternoon to correct me on that. That's true.

But I do want to say that people are finding out that you have removed rent control for people who move. Yes, if you stay a prisoner in your apartment — in other words, if you never move out of your rental accommodation — you may not experience a decontrol of rent. But I'm going to tell you, you do experience a decontrol of rent if you move out of it, so in effect, on a step-by-step basis, you have removed rent control.

I don't know whether the member for Renfrew North wants to join in this debate on time allocation this afternoon, whether he has anything else, but I do want to give him that opportunity if he wanted to.

The Greater Toronto Services Board: The minister will help me out —

Interjection.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I'm just reminded that I've been in the same publicly sponsored housing unit for several years now.

Mr Bradley: What I look at as well, and the minister will help me: Does this motion in any way deal with the proposed closing of the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines by your government? I'm wondering about that. It's a time allocation motion. I can remember we had a time allocation motion — I think I can remember this — on Bill 26. Is that right, Jim? Was there not a time allocation motion then?

When we had that, Bill 26 gave power to the Ontario hospital destruction commission. I'm over-emphasizing; I'm being unfair.

Hon Mr Wilson: They're experts.

1700

Mr Bradley: Jim says, "They're experts." They've been experts at closing hospitals. In St Catharines, you would know, Hotel Dieu is slated to be closed, the doors to be locked, the wood put over the windows, the building to be abandoned, while they head down the street and try to put it all in a site that won't hold it and while they remove many programs and much history from St Catharines.

I remember on the 50th anniversary, which was this year, my good friend Tom Froese, the member for St Catharines-Brock, read out a nice letter from the Premier saying: "You've done such a great job for 50 years. I wish you well in the future." Well, that future is mighty short because the doors are to shut pretty soon if somebody doesn't prevent it from happening.

I'm in danger now that the member for Scarborough East is here. He'll be listening assiduously to my remarks and wanting to comment on whether they're exactly on topic or not.

I won't mention a name, but a person phoned my office last week — I was just looking at the note again today — and here's the situation this person faces. I'm not going to point fingers. The person will probably not vote for you next time, but that's going to happen. Some will vote for you; some won't. She phoned up and said, "My husband died while waiting for medical care, they're closing down the school I teach at and my kids can't afford to go to university or college." There are three of the kinds of problems I think we have to address in this House.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Did you give her a Liberal membership number?

Mr Bradley: The member asks, did I give her a Liberal membership number. I did not do that because I thought the person phoned in all sincerity to discuss what she is particularly perturbed about. Those are serious matters she's perturbed about. I would have preferred that we try to deal with those kinds of problems.

We are dealing with the time allocation motion which closes down debate on the Greater Toronto Services Board. One area where there is a need for coordination — and the member for Mississauga West will be able to help us with this — is between Mississauga and Toronto in terms of transit. There is a debate that goes on between both. I know some of the members from Durham are concerned about this particular board and how much influence Durham might have. In terms of transportation, it would be nice to see that coordination. It makes a lot of sense.

The provincial government, in my view, has a central role to play in public transportation. One is to facilitate the movement of people in and out of major metropolitan areas, such as Toronto in this case. A second is to improve the environment. If more people have easily accessible public transportation, where there's good service at a reasonable price, they're going to use it. If they don't, they're going to tend to drive themselves into and out of Toronto, one person in the car. We'll have huge

congestion and of course much greater problems with the environment.

As I say, there are a lot of things I would have preferred to discuss this afternoon other than a time allocation motion: the condition of our hospitals. Anybody who was in the hospital 10 years ago and is back in now will tell you there's a radical difference between the two times. In other words, the service available now simply isn't there. Is it because the people who work in the hospital don't want to give it? No. They're excellent people, outstanding people, trying to provide this service. There are simply far fewer of them.

People call our constituency offices and say, "I've been waiting a long time for this procedure." It might be a hip replacement or another joint replacement that a more senior person requires, and there's great pain at this time. It may be the fact that the provincial government has put a cap on people getting eye examinations, so if they have diabetes, for instance, and they want to get an eye examination more often than the government prescribes, they can't do it. As you know, Mr Speaker, being a person who has been in this Legislature and who talks to his constituents, a person with diabetes or another affliction that affects the eyesight needs far more eye checks than you would normally allow to happen and may even need glasses more often because the eyesight in some cases unfortunately tends to deteriorate in those individuals.

I wish we were dealing with that instead of another time allocation motion. One motion procedurally that I would prefer to deal with is a motion to revert back to the rules of this House as they existed in 1991. They served us very well then. A good debate took place. Time allocation was not invoked that often those days; it was occasionally. You tried to have public hearings for people. The Minister of Municipal Affairs — it's not his bill — would know, because he's worried about this, that his friends in the municipalities were very perturbed when another time allocation motion came in closing off debate on the property tax bill and not allowing the input in committee.

I know, for instance, that the regional municipality of Niagara was looking forward to the opportunity, as were the Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, to coming before that committee tomorrow to present their views on now the seventh bill on property tax, because they didn't get it right in the first six. What happened was that through a time allocation motion which passed I think earlier this week, they closed off debate on the bill and closed down the public hearings. People out there are asking: "What is the government afraid of? If their bill is so good, if their bill is outstanding and is going to provide some relief for small business and taxes, why are they afraid to have public hearings?"

That bill, as you would know, gives a break. I shouldn't say that specific bill, but the whole thrust in property taxes is that the bank towers in downtown Toronto get a huge break, as do the big box retail outlets that are usually at the highway outside of the downtown area of the city. They get a big break and many of the small businesses in the plazas and in the downtown areas of our municipalities

across the province get zapped. All that bill does is prevent the zapping from happening before the election, but ultimately those small businesses are going to be zapped.

It is with a good deal of regret and sadness and lament that I've had to speak this afternoon on yet another time allocation motion. I hope we see no more of them. I hope we see this government start to listen to the people of this province, particularly as they get closer to an election. But from what I've seen so far, there's no evidence that that is going to happen.

Ms Lankin: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I want to begin by outlining the time allocation motion that is before us today. One of the things that concerns me on the bill we're talking about, the act to create the Greater Toronto Services Board, is that the structure and the powers that are being given to the board — or it's probably more apt to say that are not being given to the board — appear very different from the recommendations that came forward from a number of studies over the year, most notably the Golden report.

It's not even the full implementation of the government's own Milt Farrow report. I feel pretty strongly, when you've got that kind of expert review of an issue that has brought forward some very solid recommendations — difficult to implement, I'll acknowledge, just in terms of the controversial nature of them — backed up by a lot of consultation, a lot of research, and then the government decides to do something that is virtually the exact opposite, that it would be appropriate for an opportunity for people to comment on that.

I think the bill, in its form as we see now, should have had an opportunity for actual public hearings and an opportunity for people to come forward to speak directly to the legislators who will be sitting on that committee and who would have an opportunity to listen very carefully to what people had to say and perhaps take advice from those people and bring forward some amendments to the bill. I'm saying to the member opposite who was muttering over there that those kinds of reviews and opportunities for public comment have taken place.

1710

As you well know, many people look at reports and draft bills as just that, or as statements of intent from government. It's not until it's crystallized in an actual bill and the government says, "This is the law that we are going to bring in," that people turn their minds to whether it makes the grade and want to have an opportunity to comment on it. I regret that in this time allocation motion the government is precluding the public from having that opportunity. In fact, as a legislator, I regret that I am being precluded from hearing from those people in direct response to this bill, because I suspect there would be some comment out there that says that this step, while I think there is probably large agreement — I'm not going to say it's unanimous, because there are some people, particularly in some of the regions in the 905 area, outside the Metropolitan Toronto area itself or the city of Toronto, as it's now known, who I think hold a different view about the importance of moving to any kind of GTA governance.

I think there is, however, a large and growing consensus that it is important that there be a form of GTA governance, and given that that consensus has been driven through a hard-knocks approach over the course of the last six years of debate on this and of the kind of reviews I have referred to, like the Golden report, I think there are a number of people who would come forward and say to the government, "You are being much too cautious in this bill that you're bringing forward." While I suppose the government could argue it is a first step, in many ways I think it can be seen as just papering over what is a very important issue and what is a very important need in terms of this economic region that we call the greater Toronto area.

The time allocation motion sets out one day of committee, not to hear from the public as I was just raising a concern about, but one day of committee time to deal with clause-by-clause analysis. I suggest even that has been grudgingly given and is inadequate. If you look at how it is set out, the committee will have three hours on a Monday morning to begin the process of analyzing each of the clauses, the provisions of the bill, and to debate those clauses, to get further information and answers about the clauses, to put forward amendments to the clauses and then to debate and deal with the amendments. There will be about an hour on Monday afternoon, and then the time allocation motion indicates that the clerk and the Chair of the committee must just move the procedure on, deem that all of the amendments have been put, have been moved, that they're all officially in order and moved, and there will be no further discussion, debate or exploration of the intent of those amendments.

One of the things that concerns me about that kind of time allocation motion, and what I believe is quite a draconian move to simply shut down the exploration of what happens in the clause-by-clause review, is that good legislation is forgone in that process. Mistakes are made, and the government can well look to its own experience on a number of bills where you have had to bring back subsequent bills to fix problems or where it has taken unanimous consent to open up the process again in order to deal with an amendment that didn't get put by the government or should have been put or whatever. It is bad process, and bad process can also produce bad content and therefore bad law.

Mr Gilchrist: You know we've given more time than you did.

Ms Lankin: I say to the member opposite, who is continuing to mutter under his breath, the time allocation motions in previous governments have never gone so far as to completely shut down any process of hearings and/or clause-by-clause and/or amendments on such a routine basis as this government. On virtually every bill that's brought forward, three days later there's a time allocation motion, rarely are there committee hearings and even more rarely is there sufficient time to deal with the amendments or the clause-by-clause analysis.

Mr Gilchrist: Your nose is growing there, Frances.

Ms Lankin: I say to the member opposite, I take great offence at that comment. I believe that my statements at

this point are absolutely factual, what I have put on the record and will continue to put on the record, and we can begin to name the member in terms of the statements that he is making at this point in time.

The process of creating legislation and passing legislation is a responsibility that we are charged with as elected members. It is a responsibility that some of us take seriously, as opposed to being little puppy dogs or little seals that simply do their trained clapping with they're asked.

Mr Gilchrist: So we're not supposed to take exception to that condescending remark?

Ms Lankin: I think you should take exception to that. I think it's unfortunate when debate devolves in this place to that level.

The process we have seen in this House more and more often with respect to the passage of legislation doesn't befit a democratic parliamentary House such as this. I have great concerns about that. I believe that one of the things this government will go down in history being known as is a government that has trampled seriously on the democratic process. I think that is a sad legacy they will have.

I want to speak to why I have a concern about there not being sufficient time either for committee hearings or for the clause-by-clause analysis. That comes to the issue of the content of the bill itself and some of the concerns I have with respect to it. I spent quite a few years trying to come to terms with this very issue: What is the best type of governance for us to have in this large economic area?

I think all of us would acknowledge that you can't talk about the region of Peel or Halton or Durham or Toronto or Markham or Vaughan, all of these municipalities and regions, as entities isolated from each other. It's no longer possible to view them in that way. Historically, there may have been times when there were long distances and many fields and concession roads in between those communities. They had hearts, they had centres, they grew up in different ways, they grew up for different reasons around different activities — economic activities, lifestyle activities — some of them being commuter communities, some of them centred around farming and rural activities, some of them centred around employment opportunities that might be driven by things such as hydro plants. For various reasons, communities grew up in the areas where they grew up. But over time, as they have continued to grow and as we have seen in some cases good planning in terms of urban growth, in other cases some bad urban sprawl, I would argue, the lines and boundaries have become blurred and there is a greater relationship and interdependency between these various communities.

What that means when you boil it all down is that this is an economic region. The greater Toronto area is an economic region. I think there are things that have to be addressed on that area-wide basis that can't continue to be left to the hodgepodge approach of various municipalities or regions without regard to the impact or the effects that decisions made in one area will have on another area.

In particular, I'm concerned that the bill that sets up this new Greater Toronto Services Board gives very limited powers to the board. Essentially, the only power is for the governance of GO Transit, which has devolved from the province to this new Greater Toronto Services Board.

I think there are some other key areas that really should be included at this time. I appreciate that there is a process of review in the future and that maybe — keep your fingers crossed — if people get over some of the parochial responses we have heard in some areas and/or if they find some of the answers to legitimate concerns that have been raised in other areas, there will be an evolutionary process here. Maybe we will see in the future this board, with the consensus of its membership groups, the various municipalities and regions that are being represented on it, determine and come to the province and ask to be given greater powers or to assume powers for municipalities and regions. I hope that will happen, but I think that it need not wait for that. I think it's one of the great failings of this piece of legislation.

Let me talk about the type of powers in particular that I'm concerned about. I started off by saying I think we recognize this as an economic region, and I believe the issues of economic development should be addressed on a region-wide basis, an area-wide basis.

1720

I had the great privilege of spending a couple of years in the portfolio of Minister of Economic Development and Trade. One of the things that always disturbed me was the competing nature of some of the municipalities and regions in the GTA. It's understandable, of course, when a region or municipality is attempting to build an industrial-commercial tax base, that they must work towards attracting economic development opportunities to their region. But some of the type of competition was quite destructive, and of course it has led to disparities in levels of taxation, for example, differential burdens on consumers, on residential taxpayers in different areas as they pick up the slack for discounted property tax rates being used to attract industry into an area. It seems to me that much could be accomplished by greater coordination and a sense of shared goals and responsibility for attracting new economic investment in our region.

When I met with companies from Germany, for example, or from the Asia-Pacific Rim, and we were talking about the advantages of locating in Ontario — and depending on which sector the company was from and the type of workforce that they were looking for, different parts of the province might be involved in that discussion — when we were talking about the GTA, I have to tell you that those companies didn't make a distinction as to whether it was actually Mississauga they were locating in or the city of Toronto or the city of Vaughan. That wasn't what was important.

What was important was the access to an excellent, well-educated workforce; reasonable levels of corporate income tax in terms of taxation; the fact that we have a tremendous competitive advantage as a result of our health

care system and the low cost to employers compared to parts of the United States, for example; access to transportation routes, so the development of the 407 was a very important advantage that was coming on line; of course the regional airport and the international airport. All of these things were what they looked at if they were looking at the GTA when they were considering locating here. It wasn't, "Is it Mississauga or Vaughan?" They weren't thinking in those kinds of competitive ways, but our municipalities and our regions were, and largely because of the history. I understand that.

I think this is such an important issue for us to take the next step. There have been some attempts. There has been some interesting work done in the mayors' committee and papers around economic development, the Toronto alliance and some of the work that's being done there. There are some steps, but they're fledgling steps and this legislation does nothing to promote a maturing of that very important need, requirement, for the economy of this important economic region.

Economic development, I believe, is a power that should be given to this new Greater Toronto Services Board. It should be in recognition of the regional nature of our economy, and quite frankly I think it is short-sighted and it is a true failure of this legislation that it's not addressed.

The second issue in particular that I think as a set of powers should be taken over by the Greater Toronto Services Board is with respect to waste management. There is a huge issue of waste management; a large population, 4.5 million people we're talking about, and the level of industrial activity we're talking about. There's a huge issue of waste disposal. Whether it be industrial waste or human waste, consumer waste, there is a huge issue that we have faced in terms of challenges around landfill sites, challenges that I think governments have been attempting to respond to, I'll say, over the last 10 years to varying degrees of success, but trying to deal with in terms of aggressive policies of reduction and reuse. I think they could be more aggressive — to attempt to slow down the actual production of waste in some areas.

The whole area of waste management in terms of waste disposal is an issue, but also in terms of planning. We're talking water and sewers here. Water planning is hugely important. As you look at how development has grown in the GTA, it has often been without serious regard to an overall well-developed master plan for sewers in this whole area. I happen to have a particular interest in that because I represent a constituency that is at the end of one of those big pipes. Down in the Beaches we don't have control, for example, at the top end of the sewer pipe when new communities start to build trunks and to add on to them, and it gets sent and processed through Ashbridges Bay sewage treatment plant. The waterworks are there as well, just down the beach a little bit. We don't have any control and/or input over what planning decisions are being made in other parts of the GTA which have a direct effect, by sewer hookup, to our community.

Surely we should be looking at ensuring that growth and urban development in the future is, first of all, not urban sprawl; is respectful of the very important environmental considerations in this region, things like the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine; is respectful of the farmland that we hope to keep in active farm production and is also respectful of the infrastructure capacity that we have; and that there is a master plan that is brought together with serious consideration to those factors that I just listed. That's not happening today, and it won't happen under this bill either. That's the second tremendous failure of the bill, I think, with respect to lack of powers. The whole area of waste management and water and sewer management really needs to be brought to that level.

A natural corollary to that for me is some level of significant coordination along planning. I still believe in a strong role for local municipal governments with respect to certain bylaws and zoning issues, but I believe there should be an overall regional master plan for development that again is respectful of the issues that I raised before. That's not addressed in this particular bill and those powers aren't there.

The minister might say to me in response, "But there is the ability in this coordinating body for those issues to be discussed if the municipalities wish to discuss them. I would say in response that the mayors' committee and the various iterations of that over the years that have been meeting have always had the ability to discuss these issues if they wish to do so, and we haven't made much progress. There are obvious reasons for this that we can look to in terms of some of the differing interests. It needs a structure and it needs a sense of power being given to that structure in order for those issues to actually be dealt with in a meaningful way.

GO Transit, which is one of the powers provided to this new board, the power of its governance, is an incredibly important transportation infrastructure for this economic region. I think it will become an important addition to the boards dealing with GO Transit for them to talk about coordination of their municipal transits as well to a greater degree. There has been a lot of work done on that, however. We can see over the years that there has been progress made. One of the things I'm concerned about in terms of the GO Transit position is not the governance, although we could talk about downloading. There have been some concerns about the overall direction of the government: "Is this going to end up being another example of a cost?"

1730

My concern at this point is truly more to do with the formula that's being put in place and the cost-sharing. I don't think it is fair. I don't think it works well. I asked the minister to explain it to me and I appreciate him taking the time to go through it with me. I understand that he looked for something that recognized population, recognized ridership and tried to recognize service. I think some of those things are pretty concrete: population and ridership. The nature of service, in terms of who's benefiting from that service, is more difficult, and I think the way in

which the formula has been put together puts too heavy a financial burden on the new city of Toronto as compared to the outlying municipalities and regions. I think one of the numbers I have seen is that the cost to the city of Toronto under this formula that's put in the legislation will be 50%, that they'll be funding 50% of the cost of GO Transit. The ridership of GO Transit is made up of about 85% of individuals from the municipalities and regions other than the city of Toronto.

Mr Gilchrist: That means 85% from buildings that pay property tax in Toronto.

Ms Lankin: It may not be that those numbers, in and of themselves, I say to the member who is once again muttering, paint the whole picture and that you can just from those two numbers derive an answer. I'm not suggesting that, but I think the formula as it has been set in the legislation is biased against the new city of Toronto and does not work well.

One of the other things that has happened here is that a couple of issues have been mixed up. One of the concerns the minister had is in convincing or attempting to rationalize to some of the municipalities and the regions, other than the city of Toronto, in the GTA the need for pooling of paying for social service costs and that there needed to be some balance. You don't find these balances within the same piece of legislation, and I think it's very difficult for people to understand, has the right balance been struck? This, to me, is an issue that we should explore when we get to committee. I hope there is some thought being given to it. I hope this is not just going to be rammed through, because I do believe the people of the city of Toronto will feel particularly hard done by by that provision.

I have talked about the shortfall of the legislation with respect to powers. One of the other things that I would have preferred to see the legislation be a bit more bold about at this point in time are the actual boundaries that we're talking about. The GTA as it is depicted now isn't necessarily rational. I'm not sure it's easy for anyone to draw the lines themselves, but through the process of looking at this that went on through the Golden report in particular and from others, I think there are some obvious problems in terms of what communities are considered in and what communities are considered out.

Also, we have to recognize that there are changes developing. Within the Hamilton area and in many of the communities around Hamilton — Burlington, Flamborough and others; the minister and I were talking about this actually — there is a discussion happening about whether there is an economic region there that should at some point be recognized as a greater economic region in and of itself. That to me is interesting, and that would mean some rejigging of the boundaries.

Some of the areas that are included in the GTA, because of the natural boundaries of the municipalities or the regions, particularly north of the city of Toronto, and most particularly north of Highway 407, are very different than most other parts of the GTA. There are large rural communities there.

It is in part because of the conflict of those communities being included in the GTA and because of the strong desire to ensure that rural concerns are met that they have been resistant to some of the things I would be arguing for in terms of greater powers being invested in the Greater Toronto Services Board, and I understand that. I think there has to be recognition of that. One of the members from the Durham region was speaking earlier, and I think he makes an interesting point around that.

If you were to attempt, either through boundary adjustments or through some rural strategy, as he suggested, to explicitly address those concerns, you might find some greater consensus to address some of these other issues around master planning in terms of development, around coordinated economic development instead of competitive economic development, around waste management and sewer/water management. Some of those things might come easier.

So I think that the bill falls short and lacks courage in a sense. That's something that we hear all too often from the government in question period, "We're the only government who has had the courage," and I've got the Premier's arm swing down quite well at this point in time. Here is a place where we could use a little bit of courage, and I see it lacking.

I think some of the issues of boundaries should well be addressed, and I mentioned earlier some of the environmental considerations as well, the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine, and what they mean in terms of the natural boundaries, the geographic boundaries and as well some of the historical municipal boundaries. I am concerned that we don't get much bang for the buck here. We don't get the necessary coordination of economic development that is important at this point in time.

Mr Gilchrist: You can look forward to the amendments to do what you're asking for on Monday.

Ms Lankin: To the member who's muttering yet again, in fact there will be amendments that we'll bring forward, but I am entitled, in speaking to the bill, to address the issues that I have concerns about. That's what this period of time is for. I know it's just bothering you that I take my democratic rights seriously and I exercise my right to speak, but at this point in time I want to spell out that those are the areas of concern.

I also want to say that this is entirely consistent with the position that we put forward during the debate on the government's megacity bill when you rammed through legislation to do away with local municipalities in the old Metropolitan Toronto region and to create the new city of Toronto. At that point in time we did bring forward and put out our position that said instead of moving to dismantle local government, we would like to see you move towards the elimination of regional governments and create a greater Toronto area governing body.

I know that's not without its controversy, I understand that, and it was a position in some ways hard come to over a long period of time of looking at this issue. But we were clear as a caucus that that is the position we took, and I say to the member who is not muttering right now but who

has been muttering that is consistent with the argument I'm putting forward today in terms of my concerns with respect to the bill.

Before I turn over the rest of our time to the member for Ottawa West and the member for Dovercourt who will be participating, the last comment I will make is a comment on why I think the government has failed to act, particularly given that all the road maps were there. The work had been done. There have been extensive reports through Golden and Crombie and Farrow and others looking at this. I think, unfortunately, it does come down to a lack of courage and it does come down to some pretty basic partisan politics.

The minister and others have talked about how it's time for this because we have, they imply, this unwieldy situation of 29 municipalities in the municipalities and/or regions in the greater Toronto area. Is it 29 municipalities and five regions? I think those are the numbers in the greater Toronto area.

I'm sorry, but I had to laugh when I heard that because I thought it was a dumb thing to say. It's kind of like leading with your chin, because of the 29 municipalities, one of them, the one that you forced through the megacity legislation and created the new city of Toronto, represents 2.3 million people, just over half of all of the people in that greater Toronto area. That's one municipality. The other 28 municipalities represent the other half of the people, and you're doing nothing about that.

All of the fine words that we heard in the Legislature when you were ramming through the megacity legislation about the need to end duplication, the need to bring about some rational sense of governance, then you go out to the GTA and you hear tremendous opposition from the local municipalities and, lo and behold, if you take a look at the political demographics of the region and, correspondingly, of the members opposite, you will find that there is a correlation there. There are a lot of Tories who were elected in those ridings and there are a lot of angry municipalities and angry people who came forth. I guess when your own political interests were at stake, you decided to blink on what the road maps set out as the courageous path.

What we have now is a situation where, contrary to all of those words of the government in the past about ending duplication, about reducing levels of government, we have in effect all the municipalities being left in the greater Toronto area, except where you forced through megacity amalgamation in Toronto — 28 municipalities out there. On top of that, you've got five regions and on top of that now the Greater Toronto Services Board. Folks, you're going to have to come to terms with this. This is directly in contradiction to all the things that you have said in the past. I think it's a contradiction that the province is going to have to live with, because I suspect that you will force this closure through today, and then there will be one day of clause-by-clause and we'll vote on this and the government majority will carry the bill.

1740

I'm sorry it is such a missed opportunity. While I acknowledge and think that having some structure, as loose as this is, may be a very tiny first step, and I hope there is evolution that grows from it, I think we have missed a tremendous opportunity to deal on an economic region basis with powers such as economic development, transportation beyond GO Transit, waste management and water management, and master planning for those areas.

The fact that the boundaries haven't been addressed will leave in the future a continued resistance, particularly from communities that are primarily rural-based that see their interests, and quite rightly so, as being very different from much of the rest of the communities in the greater Toronto area. That conflict will remain, so it's a tremendous missed opportunity.

Had we had some time in committee to hear from people, we might have been able to build a consensus among the members to take a few more steps forward. It appears that won't happen and that's unfortunate.

Thank you very much, and I'll share my time with the member for Ottawa West now.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): It's with a sense of déjà vu that I stand up and address the House today on this topic, because last night this House was debating Bill 56, the proposed Greater Toronto Services Board Act. The difference is that today we're dealing with a time allocation motion which will close off debate, send it to committee, as the member for Beaches-Woodbine has said, for four and a half hours of consideration of clause-by-clause, and then the guillotine will fall. Then it comes back to this House for only two hours of debate at third reading.

I have to say to my colleagues here that looking at the extent of territory this bill covers, we're talking about the planning functions for a megalopolis of four and a half million people spanning some 29 municipalities and five regional governments, and one would think there would be some considered debate around this bill, particularly since it falls so short of the recommendations that were made by a great number of studies to examine this very important part of infrastructure and planning for a very large part of the population in Ontario.

Of course we know the government is not interested in listening, is not interested in debate and simply wants to close things off and get these things out of the way. Quite frankly, it's a little shamefaced because this is such a tepid, timid bill, falling far short of what was being proposed in its own sanctioned studies, let alone the studies initiated by other, prior governments.

It's with regret that we find ourselves yet again with another time allocation motion closing off proper consideration. The member for Beaches-Woodbine is quite correct when she says that this legislative process we engage in is to seek to perfect legislation, and that requires due consideration and due opportunity so that we don't make mistakes.

I'm just boggled by what happened with the property tax reform that this government initiated some 23 months ago. We're debating the eighth bill in that long list of

corrections, amendments and revisions of their property tax agenda, to the point that even when the Minister of Finance tabled his eighth property tax bill in this House, he announced he would be submitting further amendments. It just boggles the mind and it just continues and continues.

Today's bill that we are discussing, the time allocation motion the government has presented, is no small matter. We're dealing with the process of urban planning for a major portion of this province, involving billions upon billions of dollars. We're talking about the provision of infrastructure: roads, sewers, sidewalks, parks, community centres, all the range of services that every community needs, spanning such a large area, based on boundaries that were set 150 years ago, and yet we find that what is being proposed here is simply a forum.

I would like to read from the press release that was put out by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. "The GTSB, the Greater Toronto Services Board, if approved by the Legislature, would be a forum for promoting better coordination and integration of interregional services in the greater Toronto area." Such a magnificent advance: a forum. Do the mayors who already meet not have the ability to chat with each other? Is that not in itself a forum for discussion? But oh, no, we must have legislation to formalize this process. Does this help in terms of accountability? Does this help in terms of creating a decision-making body that can say where the taxpayers' dollars are going to go?

We heard the member for Durham East earlier this afternoon say to us that for his region out in Durham, he wanted to see amendments coming forward to protect the interests of his region. Well, in the four and a half hours that this bill is going to go before committee, will there be the opportunity to have rational discussion of the amendments needed to make this a better bill? I don't think so. Quite frankly, is there going to be the ability for any of the 29 municipalities or the five regions, including the newly created city of Toronto, which is paying the freight for the bulk of these decisions through its assessment — is there going to be the ability for those bodies who have a long history of planning for their communities to contribute towards a more rational form of decision-making? We all know, reading the results of the previous report, that there is a crying need for an official plan process for this megalopolis that we call the Golden Horseshoe, the greater Toronto area.

This government's not interested. This government is just not interested. This government has downloaded so many services to the municipalities, particularly at regional government level, has abandoned public transit entirely to the local property taxpayer, and yet we're dealing with something here that cries out for the appropriate investment into public transit, an investment that the property taxpayer cannot carry on his own and that there are huge provincial interests in. If we simply allow for urban sprawl to go on and service car-oriented development and we end up creating conditions of congestion, it costs us all. It costs us in terms of the health aspect, it

costs us in terms of the environment, and it costs us economically. Congestion means greater delays in the moving of goods and services throughout our community and greater delays in terms of ensuring that the people who provide these goods and services, the employees in these industries ranging from top to bottom, have proper access not only to their jobs and the services necessary to maintain those employment opportunities, but also where they live.

This is no small matter. This is a matter that affects taxpayers in Ottawa-Carleton, taxpayers in London, taxpayers in Windsor and Hamilton and throughout all of Ontario, because we know how much the greater Toronto area provides in terms of economic activity, and we want this to be done on a sane and rational basis.

The Golden report laboured mightily to produce a magnificent report that talked about the infrastructure challenges facing the residents of the greater Toronto area and the challenges facing the taxpayers of Ontario. This government has transformed that report into a tiny mouse. This bill is so sad in terms of its timidity and its tepidness. But unfortunately, the legislative process that we have with us today permits the government, after three days of debate — the second reading of this bill started just one week ago. Last night was the third opportunity for members in this House to participate in this debate, a debate that is going to have consequences in terms of billions of taxpayer dollars. Yet last night was the third opportunity.

So what do we see this government doing? As soon as we have accumulated three days of debate, it steps in and moves its time allocation motion, because it knows all the answers. It's not a government interested in listening whatsoever, although it's amazing to see \$47 million being spent on government propaganda that "Mike Harris is listening, and please send in all those forms." The proof is directly the opposite. It's not interested in providing opportunities for any of the players to come and speak to the actual bill. True, there was a version that was tabled and they had opportunities to comment on it, but the final bill that we have here is remarkably disappointing in the inadequacy of its achievement.

1750

Here we are, faced with this bill, no opportunity for hearings, and four and a half hours of consideration on Monday, December 7. This is not good government. What happens when we see the government go down for the umpteenth time? We have lost count. I hate to say this, but we've lost count on our side of the House of how many times this government has shut off debate and just proceeded on willy-nilly. We know this government is not perfect. We see the eighth bill on property tax.

Mr Gilchrist: You're getting \$2 million for research.

Mr Cullen: The member opposite continues to mutter, but it is embarrassing to find ourselves debating the eighth bill on property tax assessment. Quite frankly, it won't be the last bill either. It's embarrassing to find property tax legislation in the 11th month, now the 12th month, of a 12-month tax year. It just boggles the mind, but here we are, faced with the government ineptitude and dealing with

a very important piece of the planning puzzle for over 4.5 million taxpayers and residents in the greater Toronto area, and the government labours mightily and comes forward with a mouse of a bill.

It's with regret that we find ourselves here dealing with yet another time allocation motion that shuts down debate on what should be a very important topic to provide the basis upon which we can plan properly and appropriately for the next 20 years for the greater Toronto area.

In my community of Ottawa-Carleton, we've just completed an official planning process where we have come forward with an official plan that's going to look at growth for the next 20 years, that's going to seek to avoid the cost of urban sprawl so we can have balanced communities, affordable communities that do not have such a tremendous environmental impact, that are livable communities that won't cost the taxpayer an arm and a leg, that will support public transit, support good community facilities such as schools, recreation programs, community programs, so people can live in a well-balanced community.

That's what people expect from their planning authorities, yet this government takes an existing mayors' forum, where the mayors of the GTA meet and talk about these issues, and formalizes it here with the Greater Toronto Services Board Act and then emasculates it by saying under certain circumstances you need 75% of the vote to change anything, and in other circumstances you need two thirds. How have we advanced any yardsticks here?

It is with regret that we're dealing with this time allocation motion, it is with regret that we aren't given the opportunity for further commentary on such an important process and it's with regret that we find the government stating in its time allocation motion that it shall go to committee, no public hearings, four and a half hours of clause-by-clause, and then to come back to this House with the amendments, whatever amendments may come forward — I hope the member for Durham East will be satisfied; we'll find out — to only two hours of debate here.

With that, I'll turn the debate over to my colleague from Dovercourt.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have the opportunity to make a couple of comments as the debate on this, yet again, venture of the government into the area of time allocation comes to a close in a couple of minutes' time.

As my colleagues from Beaches-Woodbine and Ottawa West have indicated, this is another example of this government rushing forward to bring in legislation. In this case, they brought it in some time ago but they let it sit on the books, didn't do anything, gave for the last couple of months no indication that they were serious about proceeding with this. Then all of a sudden, with two weeks left in the sittings, we're asked to rush this through because they've now decided again that it's a priority for them and they have to get this done and they want to get it done before January 1. That may be one of the clearest indications that the House may not indeed come back after we recess, whether it's going to be next Thursday or the

week after that, because we expect to be here another couple of weeks, and that's fine.

The point is that this is again another clear example of the government not just using its majority to muzzle debate here but, quite frankly, not being able to manage its own business and having to resort to these types of tactics to try to push through legislation at the last minute. I'm sure we'll see this again during the course of the remaining week or two on other bills. Whether it's the budget bill that we're debating later tonight and tomorrow, whether it's the yet-to-be-introduced bill that the Minister of Transportation promised — not even in this House, but in the scrum outside following question period today — to implement the pilot projects on red light runners, we'll have to see what that's like. But I heard him say that whether the legislation gets passed before Christmas or not is up to the opposition because he's now a hostage of the opposition.

Who determines within the government what in heaven's name they're going to do with various pieces of legislation, Speaker? Surely they have the power. They certainly have the majority in this House to decide what they want to do, to decide what priority they're going to give to legislation as opposed to then deciding at the last minute, after lots and lots of time, that they weren't going to do something, in this case the GTSB, in that case moving on the issue of red light runners, and now all of a sudden, in the last days of this legislative session, all these things have to be done, all these things have to be passed or the world's going to crumble.

The world is going to crumble around the Mike Harris government. It's going to happen in the next election, and none too soon. If all of this is simply indication after indication that the government really wants to close down the House, not come back, call an election, whether it's going to be late winter, early spring, late spring or whatever they choose to do, then that's fine. Let's just get on with it and let the people of the province have an opportunity to pass judgment, as they surely will, on the Mike Harris government.

In that election, we'll have a great opportunity to talk with people about those people who have benefited and those people who have not benefited from the actions of the Mike Harris government, actions that have had at the basis of their activity the implementation of the 30% income tax cut that has not benefited most people. For most people we are in fact seeing cut after cut.

Even in this important area of restructuring of the greater Toronto area we've had that the government is doing something, the government is not doing something. They certainly were prepared to ram through major changes within one half of the GTA, that is the city of Toronto, to make haste with that and to make changes despite all the good warnings and good advice they received from all corners. Now, on this one they are proceeding to set up, as my colleague from Beaches-Woodbine was indicating, another chat session for the GTSB and the mayors and other politicians in the greater Toronto area.

What we need is fundamental reform in terms of the regional level of governance in the greater Toronto area. I had a chance to talk a bit about that in debate on the actual bill yesterday and will have very limited opportunity, obviously, to get into some of that discussion in committee, given what the government is doing with this, which is sending the bill to committee for one day for some amendments to be made.

We'll be pursuing some amendments in committee along the lines of what I indicated yesterday, which is that at the very least, if the government is insistent on proceeding with the establishment of the Greater Toronto Services Board, they should see it as a transition to a greater Toronto area regional level of government. That's the course of some of the amendments we'll be pursuing.

I'll be very interested to see how the government reacts to that because therein will lie the truth about how serious they are about turning this very mild, very non-existent move, other than at a symbolic or public relations level, in terms of establishing this board, which will simply be another discussion forum with very little in the way of any powers. We will see if the government is serious about looking forward to the next millennium and setting the framework within which real reform can happen, reform that they were not prepared to bring in as the Crombie study suggested, as the Golden study suggested that in fact should be the first priority of any restructuring of governance and the delivery of services in the greater Toronto area and not the work they did to amalgamate the municipalities in the city of Toronto as they have done.

We will be pursuing those issues and we will see how serious the government is about real reform in this area. We suspect that they are not because they don't want to rock the boat in the 905 area, where a lot of the political support for the government is, and they don't want to lose any potential support as we head into the next election there. They have carefully crafted and recrafted the GTSB legislation. They have even taken any real or seeming powers that this body would have had in the previous incarnations, as we saw it in the previous reports. What we have is simply another discussion forum that, if left as it is, will not lead to anything more significant than what we have now in the informal meetings that happen on a monthly basis between the mayors in the greater Toronto area.

We will be pursuing the issue of real reform through some amendments that would establish this as a transition body towards establishing one regional government in the greater Toronto area. We understand that there has to be lots of discussion about the parameters of that and we encourage and want to have that discussion. That would be a far better discussion than the kind of ramming through of this type of mild legislation that the government

wants to use simply to be able to pretend that they're doing something when in fact they are not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I'm compelled to interrupt.

Mr Leach has moved government notice of motion number 43.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; it will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1801 to 1806.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Leach has moved government notice of motion number 43. Those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Boushy, Dave
Carroll, Jack
Chudleigh, Ted
Clement, Tony
Cunningham, Dianne
Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Elliott, Brenda
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary
Froese, Tom
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Grimmett, Bill

Guzzo, Garry J.
Hamrick, Charles
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Johnson, Ron
Jordan, W. Leo
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Leach, Al
Leadston, Gary L.
Martiniuk, Gerry
McLean, Allan K.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al

Parker, John L.
Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Shea, Derwyn
Skarica, Toni
Smith, Bruce
Spina, Joseph
Stewart, R. Gary
Tumbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Villeneuve, Noble
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

The Deputy Speaker: Those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Boyd, Marion
Bradley, James J.
Caplan, David
Castrilli, Annamaria
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Conway, Sean G.
Crozier, Bruce

Cullen, Alex
Curling, Alvin
Gerretsen, John
Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Lankin, Frances
Lessard, Wayne

Martin, Tony
Miclash, Frank
Morin, Blain K.
Pouliot, Gilles
Ruprecht, Tony
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 53; the nays are 22.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 tonight.

The House adjourned at 1809.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Leachess-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Soins de longue durée, ministre délégué aux affaires des personnes âgées	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Cambridge	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Carleton	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Wood, Len (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Chatham-Kent	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Chochrane North / -Nord	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Chochrane South / -Sud	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
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	Tilson, David (PC)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
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Dufferin-Peel	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Lincoln	Shechan, Frank (PC)
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Durham East / -Est	Saunderson, William (PC)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Durham West / -Ouest	North, Peter (Ind)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
	Hoy, Pat (L)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Durham-York	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Elgin	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Essex-Kent	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Essex South / -Sud	Hastings, John (PC)		Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Etobicoke-Humber	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Etobicoke Lakeshore	McLeod, Lyn (L)		
Etobicoke Rexdale			
Etobicoke West / -Ouest			
Fort William			

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Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)	Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
Nickel Belt	Morin, Blain K. (NDP)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
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Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
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Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
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St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Lyn McLeod, Lillian Ross, Bruce Smith
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

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Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 December 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 décembre 1998

The House met at 1831.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CREDITS AND REVENUE PROTECTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR LES CRÉDITS D'IMPÔT ET LA PROTECTION DES RECETTES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 81, An Act to implement tax credits and revenue protection measures contained in the 1998 Budget, to make amendments to other statutes and to enact a new statute / *Projet de loi 81, Loi visant à mettre en œuvre des crédits d'impôt et des mesures de protection des recettes contenus dans le budget de 1998, à modifier d'autres lois et à en édicter une nouvelle loi.*

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I'm pleased to participate in the debate about Bill 81, An Act to implement tax credits and revenue protection measures contained in the 1998 Budget, to make amendments to other statutes and to enact a new statute. It sounds very interesting, I'm sure. It is the follow-up, of course, to the budget that was tabled last spring. I just want to cover about three or four issues that are a result of not only the budget but the bill we have before us today.

The budget that was tabled back last May announced the implementation of the final stage of the Harris income tax scheme. To quote here, "Most of the tax reduction will go to the nearly three million middle-income taxpayers in this province. These taxpayers, who earn between \$25,000 and \$75,000, will receive 64%, or almost \$3 billion, of savings from the tax cut every year."

We know as well that the government is still running a deficit. The deficit for 1997-98 will be \$5.2 billion; the deficit for 1998-99 will be \$4.2 billion. We know that had the government not introduced its income tax scheme at the beginning of its mandate, we would not be in a deficit situation today; we would be in a balanced budget situation today and we would not see ourselves in the context of so many hospital closures and so many school closures to generate the funds to cover the deficit and the income tax cut. So it is a problem we have with the government's own agenda.

I know from my own by-election, from going door to door just a year ago, that when I asked people if the Harris

income tax scheme was worth the price of closed hospitals — in Ottawa-Carleton we're dealing with the closure of the Riverside Hospital, the closure of the Grace Hospital, the downsizing of the Elisabeth-Bruyère and the Montfort and Ottawa Civic Hospital. Now we learn that Bill 160 encompasses the closing of schools in my community. Queensway school is a target for closure; Whitehaven school is a target for closure. It's not clear whether it's Confederation High School or Merivale High School, but some 28 to 30 schools have been targeted for closure — all of this to accommodate the government's income tax scheme to hand back money to particularly those in the higher income tax brackets.

I am convinced that the program that is being put forward by the New Democratic Party to address this, to ensure we have funds in place so we can provide for adequate health care in our communities — as you know, Mr Speaker, we have tabled a patients' bill of rights which will set standards in health care delivery so that no one need wait for or want needed care. To finance this without adding to the deficit, we would roll back or recover the Harris income tax scheme for those individuals earning \$80,000 or more. That will generate \$1.5 billion. When we say "those individuals earning \$80,000 or more," we're talking about the top 6% of the working population in Ontario.

This budget is unfortunately a continuation of this wrong-headed policy of the Harris government —

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Would you please check.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa West.

Mr Cullen: To resume debate on this government bill, which basically follows up on the 1998 budget, I was just making the point that the Harris income tax scheme, which this government is wrong-headedly committed to and which is costing our communities in terms of health care services and education with the closure of hospitals, with the closure of schools, is not supported by the general public, as I know from a year ago in the by-election in my own community.

All parties ran on balancing the budget. However, there is clearly a rejection of this scheme of the Harris govern-

ment to close hospitals and close schools and shut down important social services merely to finance an income tax break for those with higher incomes in Ontario, and people don't think the trade is worth it. As I was mentioning earlier, the position that our party is pleased to carry forth into the next election deals with the top 6% of out population. Those individuals earning \$80,000 or more will have their Harris tax break rolled back so that we can have the funds to ensure that no one need suffer, that no one need want or wait for needed care in our health care system. I think this is a very responsible approach because it's in the context of a balanced budget that our party is pleased to pursue it.

Some people may question whether or not the New Democratic Party has adjusted from its previous experience in government. I have to say to you that being in government, and you know it full well, Mr Speaker, is a reality check, and I'm pleased to say that my colleagues have benefited from that experience. But still, to govern is to choose. We have to set priorities. The priorities we have on our side of the House meet community needs and we believe that the government's priorities do not reflect that. But that's only one part of this bill.

The other elements of this bill, and I'll read them out to you, deal with changes to the Ambulance Act, the Community Small Business Investment Funds Act, the Corporations Tax Act, the Employer Health Tax Act, the Estate Administration Tax Act, the Income Tax Act — I think I've covered that already — the Land Transfer Tax Act, the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act, the Pension Benefits Act, the Retail Sales Tax Act, the Teachers' Pension Act and the Tobacco Tax Act.

I want to pick up on one small thing about the Teachers' Pension Act. We've had the opportunity to meet with the teachers to discuss the government's proposed amendment. To our surprise, we found that the Ontario Teachers' Federation expected to be partners with the government in dealing with any amendments to their pension plan, but instead the government simply has drawn up the amendments that are contained in this bill and tabled them unilaterally without showing them to the OTF officials except just prior to the bill actually being tabled. The bill was tabled a little more than a week ago, on November 23.

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That is no way to consult with the major players who are going to be affected by this legislation. It is a slap in the face to the Ontario teachers. What they are suggesting to us is that since we're touching upon a complex topic, something that their experts are going to have to look carefully at, to make sure there are no unintended effects, they're asking this government to please sever part XI here dealing with the Teachers' Pension Act out of the bill and deal with it separately so that we can ensure that all the right things are happening. Quite frankly, I think this is a responsible approach.

We know this government is already calling time allocation as soon as it can to ram bills through. It would be irresponsible in this context to find this portion of the bill

being forced through under time allocation where there is no opportunity — we saw the government earlier this afternoon, after three days of debate, forcing through the Greater Toronto Services Board Act to committee without any public hearings, with only four and a half hours to consider amendments. We know there will be some amendments proposed on the government side, yet the guillotine will fall. I would hope that in this context here we would at least respect the Ontario Teachers' Federation's request and sever that part out of the bill.

I'm more concerned about another element in the bill that deals with the transfer of responsibilities for ambulances to regional municipalities. Here we have proposed legislation that gives the minister the ability to either direct it to an upper-tier municipality or to another agency. Quite frankly, I think this calls out for amendment. If indeed there is going to be a proper downloading of these responsibilities to the regional level, the upper-tier level, whether it's regional government or county, they should have the option of how ambulance services should be provided in their community.

In Ottawa-Carleton, we have an absolutely scandalous situation. I have in my hands a report that went to the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton dealing with an independent audit of ambulance response times in Ottawa-Carleton. You may know that the response times for ambulances are governed by legislation here in Ontario, the Ambulance Act, and that the legislative requirement for response time under provincial legislation, approved by this House and by the government through the Ministry of Health, in an urban area is nine minutes, 90% of the time. This means that the population in an urban area, whether it's Ottawa-Carleton, Hamilton, Toronto, London, Windsor, any urban area, the taxpayers there can expect to receive, 90% of the time in nine minutes, an ambulance to meet their emergency needs.

The audit that was done in Ottawa-Carleton discovered that 90% of the time in the urban area the response time was 13½ minutes, a full four and a half minutes late. Because we have some of the top cardiac treatment centres on the continent, Dr Wilbert Keon's institute at the Ottawa Civic, as well as the work done by Dr Justin Maloney to bring in paramedics, which Ottawa-Carleton was a leader on, we know that four-and-a-half-minute time is so crucial to get treatment there, to get the paramedics there so they can save lives and bring people directly to hospital so that they be given the best treatment and recover from their experience.

To find ourselves in a situation in the urban area where we're looking at 13½ minutes, 90% of the time, when the legislative maximum — I mean, there are municipalities at better than nine minutes, 90% of the time, but we're talking about the legislative ceiling, maximum, and yet here in Ottawa-Carleton, under the ministry's administration, we find this terrible drop in standards.

When all this responsibility goes down to the regional municipality, it's that level of government that should have total control because they will be responsible, accountable to their taxpayers for the level of service and

will be able to put in the appropriate resources. Unfortunately, the act does not allow all the ambulance services to go directly to regions and counties; there is an opportunity for them to go elsewhere. I don't think that's the right way to go. This is an important public service. It has to go to an accountable, responsible body, and I would think it is the regional municipalities and the counties that would best be the judge of that, seeing that they're going to have to pay for it anyway. Here the minister may direct it to another body, but the regional and county taxpayers will still have to pay the full freight. Why can they not have direct control over this? That's an important issue.

I'm going to come to something that's actually more near and dear to my heart, and that's that part of the budget and that part of this bill that deals with child care. For over three years now, three and a half years, the government has been trying to announce some kind of child care initiative and spend some \$200 million or so to "provide for child care needs," but the will is not there. The political will just has not been there. They try one program after another. There's been announcement after announcement. Even in the budget we find yet another reannouncement of a child care initiative.

What did this government do when it took office back in June 1995? It cancelled 14,000 Jobs Ontario child care spaces, each and every one of them being used by a low-income family that was trying to put themselves back on track, that was either in an education facility or out there working, trying to help their families get the income they need so they can have a future for themselves, have a future for their children, have an ability to deal with their long-term issues, whether it's health or education, retirement or what have you, to help these families get going.

What did this government do? It cancelled the program — that's 14,000 spaces we're talking about — and only after there was a storm of protest from the local municipalities and the regional municipalities did some of those get rescued by property taxpayers on an 80-20 basis. Since that time there have been no new subsidized spaces created for those families in need. These are families who need the supports so they can go out and earn a decent wage and support their families in these trying times, based on all the cuts in support services, social services, that this government has foisted upon the working poor, the working families in our province.

Three and a half years and not one single subsidized space has been provided, yet we know — I have in my hand here a report on child care in Ontario that was put together by the Ontario New Democratic Party caucus, Putting Children First: Quality Care for Ontario's Children. This particular document summarizes quite correctly the child care needs in our community. This government has really no commitment towards providing an adequate child care program that meets the needs of working parents. Here it brings in the workfare system. There is a requirement that you're going to force each and every welfare recipient — by the way, Mr Speaker, you know and I know that each and every welfare recipient is longing for a job, is longing for training to get a job, is longing

to have the ability to look after their six-year-old daughter or their 80-year-old mother or their disabled brother, is longing to have those community supports put in place so they can earn a decent wage, so they can go forward and look after their future, their health, their family.

It's a myth that the government puts out that welfare recipients aren't interested. Come to my community in Ottawa-Carleton where we have well over a fifth of the residents receiving some form of assistance. The overwhelming majority of them want those jobs, but this government has not given them a hand up at all. In fact, it has cut the supports that would enable them to get a decent wage and help their family.

But here we have in Bill 81 the reannouncement of a child care initiative after three and a half years, the same darned initiative, yet we're not getting any further ahead. Yet in the three and a half years we've also had a federal government that has tried to announce a child care initiative, tried to put money on the table, yet this government and that government haven't been able to put their act together to provide for the needs in our communities that are transparent to us all, quite frankly, because of a lack of political will — simply put, a lack of political will. Now that we're three and a half years into this process, three and a half years into this government's mandate and we're on the edge of an election, all of a sudden this government finds that there's a need out there and it's throwing money left, right and centre.

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We're spending more than ever before on health care and we're looking at hiring more nurses. Never mind they took \$800 million out of our health care system, creating the basis of our emergency rooms overload. Never mind the imbalance that was thrust upon home care.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Wrong.

Mr Cullen: The member for Ottawa-Rideau knows full well the home care crisis that was generated by this government's policies. He even put pen to paper, but he has a hard time hearing from the Minister of Health. What's his opinion about the Minister of Health and her initiative? He has stated it quite clearly. The member for Ottawa-Rideau says that the Minister of Health was not listening to him when he tried to talk about the health care crisis in Ottawa-Carleton.

We had a situation in Ottawa-Carleton last winter where the hospitals were offloading their emergency room patients on to community care. The community care couldn't handle it. They found themselves with a \$3-million deficit. People were being told they were going to be cut off over the Christmas season and had to depend on their families and friends, and only then did the government come down and say: "Oh my God, our policies are in error. We're going to have to put some money into this." The member for Ottawa-Rideau knows that story full well, but he can't get a reply from the Minister of Health. He has said so on more than one occasion.

If we want to talk about long-term care, which this government crows that it's making such tremendous advances on, when the member for Ottawa-Rideau announced in

Ottawa-Carleton the government program to provide I believe some 1,400 long-term-care spaces over eight years at the same time that the Health Services Restructuring Commission said there had to be more than that in five years, the member for Ottawa-Rideau acknowledged that it was inadequate to meet the need; acknowledged that the need for long-term care in Ottawa-Carleton was not being met by this government. So don't talk to me about trying to meet needs in our community here, in my community in Ottawa-Carleton. The government's record is plain and will be remembered by the voters in Ottawa-Carleton.

But I want to come back to the provisions in this bill. I got sidetracked. I want to come back to the provisions in this bill because I face day to day in my constituency office the walking wounded from the Mike Harris Common Sense Revolution. Every day people come in and say to me, "Mr Cullen, we have been on the waiting list for social housing for five years now. I'm in a one-bedroom apartment. I've got a 12-year-old son and a 10-year-old daughter and I'm on social assistance. I'm trying to get a job. It's very difficult out there. I don't have the skills. The government's not providing any training programs. I'm spending more than my shelter allowance on rent. That means less money for my children," for their children's food, for their children's education, for their children's health, for their children's future. "Mr Cullen, can you help me?"

I'm faced with this government having cancelled social housing projects when it took office. We have 22,000 units of social housing in Ottawa-Carleton. The waiting list is now 14,000 long. The wait is five years, net every month there are 300 people going on to this list, and this government just sits there and says, "Well, you know, we're going to have to work with the feds and we're going to have to work with the municipalities and sometime in the future somehow we're going to meet this community's needs." For crying out loud, the need was transparent three years ago, and this government has sat on its hands and merely offloaded on to the property taxpayer the responsibility for this. It is irresponsible.

I want to get back to this bill. I want to get back to child care because, quite frankly, this is something I know. For nine years I was a policy analyst at health and welfare and we dealt with the emerging issue of child care.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Perth.

Mr Cullen: I can tell you that 80% of women who have children under the age of six are out there working. They have to work. Despite this government being in place for three and a half years, these women have to work, they have to contribute. They have to contribute to their family; they have to contribute to their family's well-being. What is this government doing to support them, to make sure that these children are being adequately looked after? Are they supporting the educational system to make sure that these kids have the wherewithal to go to school, to make sure that there are after-four programs to deal with their needs? Not at all. This government has cut that.

You go into the school boards now and you look at that magnificent formula they brought forward, and I say that so sarcastically because that formula does not allow these school boards to provide these after-four programs any more. You can't shift money from silo to silo. You can't go to your taxpayer and say, "Can we have these after-four programs in our schools to meet our kids' needs?" This is a saving to the taxpayer.

The government on the other side knows full well, because ministers have quoted this, every dollar invested in early childhood intervention saves the taxpayer \$5 downstream. Yet this government insists on cutting out that dollar at the outset. If you don't put that dollar investment in, downstream you pay for the additional cost of re-education, the additional cost of retraining, the additional cost of welfare, the additional cost for crime and the additional cost for housing and support for these people. It's all there.

What does this government do? It insists on giving back dollars to taxpayers who didn't ask for it in the first place, who have said, "Do not close my hospital." Tell me out here, has any member of the Conservative Party found ordinary residents who have said they have been overserved by their health care system? I tell you, come to Ottawa West where we are second to Victoria, BC, in terms of our seniors, where in the last by-election, September 4 last year, by a 53% majority, they sent a message very clearly.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): They thought they voted for a Liberal. They wanted a Liberal member.

Mr Cullen: The member here talks about sending a Liberal. They want to have that income tax rollback to support their community. That message is very clear, and I'm proud to stand behind it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): First I'd like to congratulate the member for Ottawa West for having found a party that he could enter and move into. I think he's right at home. He seems to fit in very well. The leader of the NDP said he was a breath of fresh air, and I trust that leader won't regret his comments. I notice he was in a party that kept flip-flopping all over the place and obviously he wasn't comfortable with that. He's now with the NDP and we understand he's going to be very consistent with their policies. I can understand from his previous performance that he's going to be dead-on.

He made a lot of reference to the downloading of ambulance, which in fact was a transfer of ambulance, the revenue-neutral of the Who Does What. The ambulance services fit in with the other emergency activities — and that was the intent — that are being run by the municipality, the police and the fire services.

If he remembers back to the AMO conference, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was there as was the Minister of Health, and suggested to AMO if they had a better idea, please come forward with it. I understand that AMO is considering and may come forward in

the not-too-distant future with a new suggestion on how ambulance services might be provided in Ontario.

I think the member should also remember that a year ago April or May AMO came to us with some adjustments to the Who Does What and this government adopted every single item they came in with, with the exception of the 5% that they wanted to have the municipality —

Mr Cullen: I was there. Don't try and do that.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa West.

Mr Galt: — to continue the levy property tax for education. This government wasn't about to have that. I can understand why you might think that was a good idea: Put the wedge in and keep spreading it out and the next thing they'd have 50% or 60% again, just as education was out of control before.

I come back to congratulating the member for finding a party. I hope it works out well for him in the NDP.

Mr Gerretsen: What the member for Northumberland has just stated about AMO's position with respect to the downloading is absolute nonsense. Absolute nonsense. The theory that he has been spreading here tonight the government has been attempting to spread on this issue over the last year or so. Let's just go back.

It was the government's plan originally to download about \$1 billion worth of provincial services on to the local taxpayer. They were going to download \$1 billion worth of a variety of services. AMO then met with them and, as a result of various discussions that took place, in fact only about \$500 million of services were downloaded. Sure, AMO appreciated the fact that the municipal taxpayer was only going to be downloaded \$500 million rather than \$1 billion. It's like saying, "What would you rather have, a kick in the legs or a kick in the head?"

1900

To somehow take that situation and say that the municipalities of Ontario were in favour of that kind of a download of \$500 million to the local taxpayers in Ontario is a totally erroneous statement to make. It simply is not so. I think it can be borne out by the fact that for the first time in five years about two thirds of the municipalities have felt that it was necessary to increase taxation in this province by 5% or more. That comes from the Minister of Finance's own words in the House here.

Of course, the Tories like to spin another theory on that as well, that there's somehow a conspiracy that the municipal councillors don't like Mike Harris and that's why they all ganged up and decided to increase the taxes within their own municipalities. Anybody who believes that is absolutely absurd, so I say to the member for Northumberland, don't make those kinds of statements again.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm pleased to respond to the member for Ottawa West, but I do have to say that the member for Northumberland is using what I can only call creative interpretation, if that's parliamentary, Mr Speaker.

To the member for Ottawa West, in particular two things I want to comment on, as well as a question to him. He spoke at great length about ambulance services, and I

know that he is very familiar with the ambulance services in the Ottawa region. In fact, he's quite right that they were one of the leaders in terms of introduction of advanced life supports and paramedic skills in that area. Also, he's quite right when he ties it into the Ottawa Heart Institute. I had the opportunity when I was the Minister of Health to do some work with Dr Keon. It's an amazing group of people there.

The whole issue of response time and defibrillation and those sorts of things in terms of paramedic skills is absolutely critical when we're talking about saving lives. One of the things I have always thought is that it would be better to move toward some unified ambulance service in response to the Swimmer report and others. I wonder if the member thinks that might have been a better way to go than through the downloading that's happening without the necessary resources there and the lines of accountability.

He is also absolutely right in the comments that he makes about child care and this government's record on child care. We heard the phoniest announcement from the finance minister two and a half, three budgets ago, when he said, "We're going to spend more than any government ever spent in the history of the province." Of course, three years later not one penny has been spent. They've changed the program. It was going to be subsidies and then it was going to be a tax credit and now it's an income supplement.

It would be very helpful if they looked at the root problem. The root problem is there aren't enough high-quality subsidized daycare spaces. Before the parliamentary assistant gets up and says, "We've created 14,000 spaces," not one of them has been created by the government and not one of them is subsidized and accessible to low-income people who need that support to get off welfare and to get back into the workplace.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Chatham-Kent.

Ms Lankin: Oh, I guessed.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I wouldn't want to disappoint the member for Beaches-Woodbine by not standing to offer a couple of comments; however, I'm not going to deal directly with the issue of child care. I do want to offer some comments, though, on the member for Ottawa West. It's interesting that he's shifted parties across the way. But you know, the rhetoric is exactly the same. It has nothing to do with anything constructive. He went into a diatribe for 20 minutes, critical of absolutely every initiative that this government has undertaken.

We have come to expect from the third party more constructive criticism than that. We don't always agree with their criticism. Quite frankly, the member for Beaches-Woodbine tends to lead the charge on this. She offers to participate, to help, to give her services in order to provide something better in the way of government in Ontario, and oftentimes she has been a great asset to me in different things we've dealt with.

In the time he spent in the Liberal Party the member for Ottawa West did nothing but rant against things he had very little knowledge about. He's now moved over into the third party and his rant is exactly the same. You could

close your eyes, he could be anyplace. He really has a serious credibility problem in this place.

It's interesting that he's got on the kick now of rolling back the income tax cut. He wants to raise taxes. It's nice to know that he's left the Liberal Party, which doesn't know what they want to do, and he's endorsed the NDP position of increasing taxes. At least we know that he endorses the policy of higher taxes and he's abandoned the Liberals, who, by his own admission, have no idea what they want to do about anything. So he's in a pretty good place.

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, he was just upset he lost the nomination. That's what it's all about.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa West, you have two minutes.

Mr Cullen: I'm not going to get into the process of who did what to whom, but I do want to thank — and to the member for Kingston and The Islands, if you want to go out for a drink sometime, I can tell you all the details.

Mr Gerretsen: You already have.

Mr Cullen: No, unfortunately, you don't know them all.

I want to thank the members for Northumberland, Kingston and The Islands, Beaches-Woodbine and Chatham-Kent for their contributions. If there are a couple of things that I do know what I'm talking about, it certainly is my community, their concerns about health care, their concerns about education because I was a trustee for six years, their concerns about the ambulance services. I was on regional council and we did go through the downloading exercise and we had excellent staff to guide us through this.

I just want to quote something here, because the member for Northumberland talked about the downloading of ambulance services and how that was supposed to meet up with other dispatch services in the regional municipalities and counties and how it's supposed to be a greater synergy or a greater coordination.

The fact of the matter is that a very crucial element of the downloading or transfer of ambulances to regions and counties is missing, and that's dispatch. Dispatch is staying with the province. Here we have a local, regional 911 system that looks after parameds, fire, police, the whole bit, but dispatch for ambulances is being withheld, retained by the province, and it's wrong.

I have here a letter that was sent to the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Health, written by Bob Chiarelli, chair, region of Ottawa-Carleton:

"The region of Ottawa-Carleton accepts its responsibility for full service provision of land ambulance services in the year 2000. It does not, however, accept the current very poor service provided by your ministry. This new information," which I outlined earlier, "very clearly demonstrates" —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): It's my pleasure to speak on this bill, and as well as speaking to the bill, I'd like to address some of the comments made by the member for Kingston and The Islands. He made a very

intriguing comment that interested me: Why would the municipalities raise taxes on their small businesses? Perhaps I could refer him to what's happened in Hamilton-Wentworth and give him some explanation as to why municipalities would in fact do that.

The situation in Hamilton-Wentworth, for the member for Kingston and The Islands, and I don't expect him to be totally familiar with it, is that with the recent CVA changes what happened was that the downtown area in Hamilton had basically collapsed. Taxes were too high there for a long time and the property values had collapsed accordingly.

Meanwhile, the Hamilton municipality was over-spending and having numerous failed programs. Anyone in Hamilton is pretty familiar with them. In fact, the local taxpayers' federation has a pamphlet called 37 Reasons Not to vote for any Incumbents, and it lists the numerous fiascos totalling \$178 million, all of which had to be paid for by taxpayers, and a large bulk of that by downtown Hamilton businesses, over the last 20 or 30 years.

But anyway, what happened in Hamilton was that the downtown businesses were paying large taxes to the point where they couldn't do it, so they started to leave the downtown — that's pretty predictable — and they went out to the suburban areas and out to the Mountain area of Hamilton. When the CVA changes came in, the downtown areas all of a sudden found themselves with collapsed property values. In fact, they would benefit from CVA changes by paying a lot less taxes.

But what happened at the same time was those taxes, which were already too high in the downtown area — Hamilton has the second-highest tax rate in the province — now went out to the outlying areas. So what was happening was that after the downtown being ruined and the businesses fleeing, those heavy taxes were coming out to the outlying areas. When the CVA changes came in, Hamilton used the tools to make sure the downtown area benefited immediately by having dramatic tax decreases, and the outlying areas had dramatic tax increases.

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Then the question was, dealing with the point you made, why would municipalities do that? Why would a municipality deliberately inflict large tax increases on the outlying areas? The answer in Hamilton, unfortunately, was somewhat sinful and somewhat disturbing. Hamilton felt it was shortchanged on the download and was desperate to have some kind of compensation for that.

If you break down who benefited from the tax decreases and who was hurt by the tax increases, the downtown area benefited. Those two areas — and it may be a coincidence — were represented by the opposition, including your fellow member from Hamilton East and the NDP member from Hamilton Centre. The large tax increases were taking place in the outlying areas, which were represented by Tory members: myself, Mr Doyle and Mr Pettit.

What happened politically in Hamilton was that there were dramatic tax increases in the outlying areas and there were dramatic tax decreases downtown, which by the way

were never advertised. I'm sure this is the first time you're hearing about it. Municipal politicians never told anybody that there were going to be all these tax breaks to the downtown area. That was one of the best-kept secrets in Ontario. They never mentioned it.

Mr Cullen: What was their motive?

Mr Skarica: Their motive was quite simple. There's something called A Citizen's Guide to Regional Services in Hamilton-Wentworth. Here they explain the provincial changes. Nowhere in this document, the official document of the region, is it ever mentioned that there are substantial property tax decreases. In fact, the only page that's devoted to property tax changes is entitled "Provincial Downloading and Tax Increases." It's basically blaming all the tax increases on the download shortfall, and even according to their own document it says 3.5% was the download shortfall.

Meanwhile, businesses in my area are going up 100%, 200%, 1,000%. I have a whole list of them here. I don't need to go on and on, but many businesses were doubling and in fact tripling. I'll give you a couple of examples: Flamboro Quarries paid \$19,000 in 1997, \$121,000 in 1998; Redland Quarries paid \$55,000 in 1997, \$153,000 in 1998; and on and on it goes.

Basically, the position the province was in and certainly the position I was in was that it didn't change. When the reality of what happened came forward — and I address this again to the member for Kingston and The Islands — the region's response was troubling. They saw that all these businesses on the outside of the region, in the suburban area and Hamilton Mountain, were going to fail. There were numerous articles on it, a number of newspaper articles entitled: "Tax Hike Threatens Survival"; "Local Taxpayers Must Have Help"; Arend Kersten from the Flamborough Review described the crisis in Flamborough as the gravest to ever face the town; and so on and so forth. The only response from the regional chairman was, "The politicians have failed taxpayers." That was most evident and didn't need to be said by anyone — a very dramatic understatement of what went on.

What happened there, I say to the member for Kingston and The Islands, going back to the official document entitled A Citizen's Guide to Regional Services in Hamilton-Wentworth, was that the region had the audacity to put this in the document: "A tax structure has been created to offset large increases caused by reassessments for commercial and industrial properties. In addition, eligible small and medium-sized businesses have received tax rebates as indicated on the property tax bill."

Mayor Bob Morrow, who doubles as the mayor of Hamilton and fundraising chair for the member for Hamilton East, stated on October 21, 1998, "There certainly was a strong attempt to use the tools as best we could."

Mr Gerretsen: What's the point?

Mr Skarica: I'm addressing the point. You said, "Why would municipalities deliberately inflict large tax increases on small business?" That's what happened in Hamilton. They did it deliberately.

Mr Cullen: No, they didn't.

Mr Gerretsen: No, no.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa West, member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Skarica: The municipalities used the tools extensively to accomplish two things —

Mr Cullen: So it's all their fault?

Mr Skarica: I'll address whose fault it is in a minute if you want.

What they did, and it was deliberate, was that there were dramatic tax decreases in downtown Hamilton, which by some strange coincidence is represented by members of the opposition, and the tax increases all took place in areas which are represented by Tory members. The only response from the region and from the towns was, "We need money from the province to address this situation." They were not prepared to do anything. Finally, the province had to move in with a 10-5-5 situation, and that provided relief for my businesses and for the businesses in the suburbs of Hamilton and on the Mountain.

Even to this day, I should tell members of the opposition, I am being lobbied by those same municipal politicians who say, "Hamilton needs an exemption," knowing full well there are hundreds of businesses in Hamilton, many of them in my riding and some in Mr Doyle's and some in Mr Pettit's, that will be wiped out under the present situation.

Mr Cullen: These tax increases happened because of what? What changed to cause those taxes to go up?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa West, you had your turn.

Mr Skarica: The region's response is, not only will they not deal with anything in the present situation that's going to bankrupt numerous companies; now that the province is moving in to save those businesses, the region has the audacity to lobby myself and others to say, "No, don't do that; give us an exemption; let's go back to the way it was a couple of months ago," knowing full well that hundreds of businesses are going to be wiped out. We're not talking Chrysler or large corporations; we're talking mom-and-pop operations. We're talking people who have worked their whole life, who work 60 to 80 hours a week to make a modest income. They know those people will be wiped out and they don't care. Their response is: "Do nothing, or at best we want more money from the province. We want the download money."

Mr Gerretsen: That's nonsense.

Mr Skarica: That's not nonsense. If you look at the Hamilton Spectator —

Mr Gerretsen: They don't care? That's nonsense.

Mr Skarica: I suggest to the member for Kingston and The Islands, look at the Hamilton Spectator, look at all the local papers. The explanation from the regional politicians to the local small business people is: "It's not our fault. We can't do anything. It's the provincial changes. It's the download."

Mr Gerretsen: Well, it is the changes.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa West.

Mr Skarica: I want the House to note that the members have agreed with what the regional politicians are saying: "It's not our fault, it's the province. It's the download." Well, the download, according to the region's own documents, is a 3.5% increase. How does that translate into a 100% or a 200% or a 1,000% increase?

Again, members of both oppositions have indicated here tonight that, yes, it is the province's fault. It is their changes, and so on and so forth. It's Mike Harris's fault for Hamilton's problems. It's interesting to note, if you take a look at —

Mr Cullen: It wasn't there before. We didn't have those problems before.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa West, I don't want to repeat it again. Please.

Mr Skarica: Actually, I don't mind, Mr Speaker. The member for Ottawa West is helping me considerably. He just indicated that it was there before. He's right, it was there before. Let's take a look at the tax rates before any changes.

Burlington — isn't that in the province of Ontario? Burlington is in the province of Ontario. Is not Mike Harris the Premier there? The tax rate there was 3.58% before any of the changes by the province. The town of Paris — I know Paris is in France, but we have one in Ontario too — 4.4%; Caledonia, 4.15%; Cambridge, 2.01%; the city of Mississauga, 3.82%; the town of Markham, 3.3%; the town of Dundas, which is where my area is, 6.12%. That's the commercial rate. Is that Mike Harris's fault? Isn't he the Premier of all those other places? How come the tax rate in my town is double and triple other places? You can drive to Cambridge within an hour and you're going to get one third of the tax rate. That's not Mike Harris's fault. Like the member for Ottawa West said, that existed before. That's not our government's fault; it's a fault of the region.

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Why is the region the second-highest taxed area in Ontario? Why is that? Is it Mike Harris's fault that the tax rates in the Hamilton-Wentworth region are the second highest in the province? Is it? I'm not hearing anything from the opposition, because they know the answer to that. You can help me out, member for Ottawa West.

Mr Cullen: The government made all these changes. You screwed up.

Mr Skarica: All right. Before the changes, what was a commercial business in Hamilton-Wentworth paying? The comparison of education taxes — that's another thing. "Hamilton's been unfairly picked on. There's an \$18-million shortfall," and so on and so forth.

Mr Cullen: You did that, got the download and the education tax. Oh, my lord, there's no benefits to the commercial there.

Mr Skarica: The commercial rate for education in Hamilton-Wentworth is at the provincial average, \$16,500. Halton's right next door. So if you have a business in Hamilton-Wentworth, you're paying \$16,500. If you move a couple of kilometres to the east, you're paying

\$10,500. Isn't Mike Harris the Premier of Halton as well? I think he is. Six thousand dollars less. Isn't there the same education system in Halton as in Hamilton-Wentworth? The answer is yes. Go west, young man. Waterloo, \$12,500, \$4,000 less than Hamilton-Wentworth. Go south: Niagara, \$10,500. All the areas surrounding Hamilton are substantially less.

I've heard time and again in this Legislature from the members from Hamilton on the education changes: Hamilton has been shortchanged. On the industrial rate, not the commercial rate, they're paying \$18 million more and so on and so forth. Yes, they are. But is that the province's fault? No. It was the Hamilton Board of Education that set those rates. We froze them and now we're reducing them over eight years. The thing that nobody from the opposition talks about in this House is: What if we hadn't made those changes? What if we hadn't put in Bill 160? What would happen in Hamilton is that you'd forever be paying more, \$18 million more. In eight years, that'll be wiped out, but you'd probably be paying more than the provincial average forever.

The tax rate on industrial properties in Hamilton is almost double the provincial average, which is 3.3%. In Hamilton-Wentworth they're paying 5.4%, about 75% more. In the surrounding regions: Halton, 3.4%; Waterloo, 3.9%; Niagara, 4.6%. Those are all areas that surround Hamilton, those are all areas where Mike Harris is the Premier, those are all areas where for a long time they have been paying less tax, long before Mike Harris ever became Premier of this province.

For the region or for anyone else to say Hamilton has real problems due to high taxes, they're right on that count. But when it comes to blame, it's got nothing to do with the province and it's got everything to do with what's been going on in Hamilton for a long time: failed businesses, higher tax rates and basically no attempt to curb spending. Again, I'm not hearing anything from the opposition right now, because they know deep down in their heart of hearts that everything I've said is true and in fact it's documented.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Bullshit.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): What kind of talk is that?

The Acting Speaker: Order, order. I didn't hear anything, honestly. There's so much noise. Order. If someone has said a wrong word, whoever that is, please apologize.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member said "balderdash."

Mr Christopherson: No, I didn't, and I apologize, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask you to keep quiet, otherwise I can't hear a word. Member for Wentworth North.

Mr Skarica: The fact of the matter is that Hamilton does have higher tax rates than most other places. There's an explanation for that and the explanation is very simple. This is not me saying this; I didn't prepare this document. The Taxpayers Coalition of Hamilton-Wentworth

prepared it. It's entitled, 37 Reasons Not to vote for any Incumbents. They have an itemized list of failed programs, of money that's been spent in the region of Hamilton — and this may well contribute to why the tax rates there are so high. I'll give you some examples.

The air show, \$700,000. Over the past five years the air show has lost \$800,000, which has been covered by the region; in 1997, a regional grant of \$100,000 to reduce the loan. Art gallery, \$1.3 million.

One of my favourites is the constituent assembly report — \$600,000 for this document. This document said that you could save \$100 million to \$200 million by amalgamation. When Gardner Church came into the area and talked about what savings could be had, somehow that \$100 million to \$200 million shrunk to \$35 million.

Gore Park rebuilding and restructuring: Gore Park is an island, basically, of government ineptitude in the middle of Hamilton. If you go into downtown Hamilton, you have to drive by it. They used to have a beautiful fountain, probably as beautiful as any in the country. That was torn down for improvement. People didn't like the improvement, and so another fountain was put up and buildings were put up. They were torn down. Basically, Gore Park is always changing, never for the better, it seems. But \$8 million has been spent on makeovers there since 1983.

Grey Cup 1996: who here remembers who played? I don't, but I remember who paid: \$2.8 million is what the taxpayers had to pay for it. The Hamilton Street Railway, which has been losing money for a long time — \$13 million to build a facility in 1984. Apparently public transit did not use this, as the increase anticipated in Hamilton did not occur, and that facility is not in use. Some \$2.2 million was spent to recover two boats, which remain on the bottom of Lake Ontario. It's not the Titanic, but the taxpayers there have lost \$2.2 million. NHL bids: As you know, Hamilton has bid for an NHL team. Everybody knows that. What most people don't know is it costs a lot of money: \$300,000 was spent on that. Science fair, \$300,000. I don't know what happened at the science fair, but it appears that the politicians invented a new way to lose money in Hamilton. So about \$180 million in total.

When you hear in the Legislature that there are changes in Hamilton, it's true. They have high tax rates, but the reason they have high tax rates is because of misspending for a long time by regional government.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Gerretsen: I actually have respect for the member who just spoke, but not for the approach he took here tonight. I think it's pretty low to start attacking other levels of government and individuals in those levels of government when they don't have an opportunity to respond. I note that the entire speech related to Bill 79, not Bill 81, which is all right, because I want to address some issues relating to Bill 79 as well.

Let me suggest to the member that what happened in Hamilton-Wentworth is happening elsewhere as well. As I indicated here last week, the same thing, or something similar to it, has happened in the greater Napanee area, where as a result of a restructuring that was ordered by

this Minister of Municipal Affairs — and I have the actual tax figures here — there have been great shifts in residential taxes from the town of Napanee to the surrounding four townships. Let me review those figures. These people are madder than heck too, because all of a sudden they have seen their taxes increase by 100% to 150%.

Let's just take a look at the residential portion. What has happened? Adolphustown: \$108,000 was taken in residential taxes and for 1998 it's \$278,000, more than twice the amount. South Fredericksburg went from \$33,000 in taxation for residential purposes to \$243,000, a 626% increase. In Richmond it went from \$794,000 to \$945,000, a 19% increase. In Napanee it went from \$1.8 million to \$1 million. What you have to understand is that when you get these major restructurings and throw in downloading, you're going to get these massive changes that the people out there have absolutely no understanding of. All they know is that their taxes are going up and it's not right.

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Mr Christopherson: I wasn't even scheduled to be in the House this evening, but I happened to be working at my desk and listening to the House and started to catch the rantings of the member for Wentworth North, particularly the last 10 minutes, and shot down here to the House right away. I didn't hear all of it, but I heard the part about the fact that — get this — the whole city, and I guess the regional council too, according to the member, supposedly have this big conspiracy where they were able to finagle the whole tax bill so that the business taxes only went up in Tory ridings and went down in opposition members' ridings. What a lot of nonsense.

The fact of the matter is that the people who got hurt the most by your screw-up of changing the property tax system — bear in mind, we're on your seventh bill, trying to correct all the mistakes you've made and even that one has flaws — the area that got damaged the most, was downtown Hamilton, and that's my riding. Downtown Hamilton, I remind the member, is also the official downtown of the region. So before he moves off too far into this fantastic psychological analysis of how council supposedly is conspiring, and gets lost in his own paranoia, I suggest he stand back and have a look at what the reality is.

Further to that, he goes on to say — I think he used the word "audacity" — that the local elected officials have the audacity to ask him for an exemption for our community from their latest property tax scheme. That proposal is being put forward by the chamber of commerce. You're supposed to be dialoguing with those folks, as the senior parliamentary assistant for the region, which obviously isn't going to do us one hell of a lot of good. The fact of the matter is that, given what I heard today, I think this member owes every Hamiltonian an apology.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): I think what the member for Wentworth North said related to what the member for Ottawa West was talking about. It all gets back to how much people can afford to pay. The member for Ottawa West was talking about mothers who have to

work, and it's true that with the structure of our society, with what the cost of living is and what we expect out of life, we have most families where the mother and the father work.

I spent some time during my last Christmas holiday on the Internet looking up issues related to child care and day care. I came across a writer by the name of Penelope Leach, who wrote a book called *Children First*. She talks about creating a society where children have a higher profile, a society that makes children more important. What she talked about on child care — I'm no authority but I'll just pass it on as I understood it — was that the absolute best thing for children, in her view, was for one parent at least to be at home; increasingly in our society it's the father as opposed to just the mother — I suppose more often it's the mother — but for one parent to be at home. Second-best, she suggested, is regular care in a nearby house without any turnover of the other children who are there, an environment which is a homelike environment, where there is stability and a caring environment. She picked professional daycare as third-best, behind those other two.

I think it relates very much to what parents want, and parents want choice. What we've done in this bill is give parents choice. We're giving parents with children under seven years old tax credits — actually, cheques in the mail — which will amount to up to \$1,020 for middle- and lower-income families, so they can choose to have one parent stay home with their child, which was Penelope Leach's first choice, or pay for day care, perhaps in a nearby house, which is Penelope Leach's second choice. We're giving parents the choice they need and want.

Mr Cullen: I am pleased to provide some commentary on the remarks made by the member for Wentworth North. Quite frankly, I thought we were dealing with Bill 81. The member for Wentworth North went off and discussed something that's going to be very interesting for Hamilton politics and politicians.

One of the concerns I have is with the comments he made that said all the problems with the property tax increases are not the responsibility of the government. I have to go back 23 months to Bill 106. That's the point where we start the sorry slide into the botched application of all these changes to the poor, humble, lowly property taxpayer, who has got this bill and has to figure out: "Which new property class am I in? Which new property ratio am I in? What am I paying for education that's now being levied by the province? What's happening to business occupancy tax? What's happening to market values? Why am I being stung for an increase in market values when my income hasn't gone up?"

All these things are the result of government initiatives: the government initiative to bring in market value assessment, the government initiative to go in with pooling of education property tax throughout Ontario, the government initiative to fold in business occupancy tax, the government initiative to provide some kind of — they called it a tool box.

I have been a property taxpayer for over 30 years. I have paid these property taxes and I look at these bills and I know exactly who to call when there's a problem. With this government I have to call the Minister of Education for the education portion, not my school board trustee. I can't call my regional council and my city councillor to find out what's happening with market value assessment, because the province does that. We went through market value assessment in Ottawa-Carleton and we certainly didn't botch it like this government has done. It's amazing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Wentworth North has two minutes to respond.

Mr Toni Skarica: I want to thank the members for speaking and responding to what I had to say, and particularly the member for Hamilton Centre. He obviously cares about his job and ran down here, feeling provoked by what I had to say. I don't have the figures here, but I have seen figures where in fact, on the original changes, the tax load had come from downtown Hamilton out to the outlying areas.

What I found interesting were his comments, and I wrote them down, where he indicated that the original changes — that's before the 10, 5 and 5 change — hurt his area the most. If I'm opposed to the exemption, then he should be opposed to the exemption as well. Since he was hurt the most by the changes by the government prior to 10, 5 and 5, then he wants the same thing I want, and that's no exemption from the current legislation. So I don't really understand his objection if he indicates that the government changes hurt his area the most.

I think we get into a philosophical debate. What our government is trying to accomplish is a reduction in taxes. It doesn't really accomplish a whole lot to say, "All right, we'll shift from one to the other." What we would like to see is a reduction in taxes at all levels. The opposition does not seem to be coming from that angle. They've opposed the 30% tax cut. They've opposed virtually every change that we have implemented that resulted in tax savings. We have a basic different philosophical bent. If I could go to Bill 81 for 10 seconds, there are tax credits in there. We take the position that tax cuts increase economic stimulus and are good for the economy.

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Speaker: The point of order is to correct my own record. Given what the member for Wentworth North has said, in listening to what he said, I did indeed put forward a position that was not consistent with what I meant to say. Clearly, the original move by the province hurt my entire riding, but one area that did benefit was downtown and Westdale, and the changes to that are what has done the greatest amount of damage. That's where the chamber of commerce was asking for the exemption and I'm supporting that exemption.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: It was certainly a very interesting speech that the member for Wentworth North gave on Bill 79 here tonight; we're discussing Bill 81. But it is a tax bill we're talking about, and whenever this government

introduces a tax bill, we all get very weary, people on all sides of the House. Remember, Bill 79 was a tax bill as well. They've had about seven or eight different tax bills to deal with the property tax situation, and they got it wrong, so we are extremely worried that they've got Bill 81 wrong as well.

Let's go back to what the member for Wentworth North was talking about it. I take it that basically what he is saying is that he does not want an exemption for Hamilton-Wentworth. I wonder if he could talk to the member from Halton Centre, and the other three Tory members from the region of Halton, because it's my understanding that those four members do want an exemption, as far as Halton region is concerned.

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I'm quoting right now from a document that was just handed to me today. It's a combined brief submitted by AMO, which is the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, the Municipal Finance Officers' Association of Ontario and the Association of Municipal Tax Collectors of Ontario. Three of these groups are the professional civil servants who work for each and every one of us in our local municipalities, who make whatever changes we do here in this House actually work on the ground.

These groups have been begging the government for at least the last year and a half to meet with them. They want to implement whatever the government wants to do in a systematic, rational fashion. I've met with them a number of times and so have other members of our caucus. They have said, "If there's only one thing you can convince the government of, please let them meet with us because we think we can implement all of these various policies in a fashion which will be acceptable to the majority of the people in Ontario, by far, and we can do it in a rational, reasonable way."

I will be referring to this document throughout my speech. Let's just deal with what they say about Bill 79 as it relates to the exemptions etc. They say, for example, "Bill 79 doesn't recognize local efforts and local solutions," which have already been implemented by the municipalities, of which the Minister of Finance said there were too few. But what Bill 79 doesn't deal with at all are those municipalities that actually did do what the province wanted in one of your other ill-fated bills that preceded Bill 79 dealing with the property tax situation.

They say: "Municipalities utilized the legislative tools provided to best mitigate tax impacts, but in a small number of cases, an identifiable group of taxpayers still faced excessive tax increases. In Halton region, a plan was adopted by regional council and supported by the four chambers of commerce within the region" — and the four local MPPs, who were all Conservative MPPs — "that would have ensured that no ratepayers faced tax increases of 15% or more. The mandatory nature of the provisions in Bill 79 fails to recognize the considerable efforts taken by municipalities to implement the new assessment regime in a manner which addresses local solutions."

I would request that the member for Halton Centre and the other four members of that area propose an amendment exempting them from that and then I would like to see how the member for Wentworth North, Mr Skarica, who just spoke, intends to vote on that. It seems to me that the Conservative caucus itself seems to be flip-flopping on this issue. Some people take this position; some people take that position. What it underscores more than anything else is that if there is total confusion about what's happened to the property taxation in this province, it is squarely the government's fault and nobody else's.

I know they've tried to blame the local municipalities. We saw a brilliant example of that just now when the member for Wentworth North basically took on the entire regional council of Hamilton-Wentworth and called them all incompetent etc. That's been the attack mode the government's been in. I must admit that the strategy they employed in this particular case is, to a certain extent, brilliant, at least so far, because people don't know who to blame. They have dumped everything together.

They have dumped restructuring together. Remember that was sold on the basis that it was going to save money. We've given example after example where it hasn't saved any money. As a matter of fact in some municipalities, as a result of restructuring, massive tax changes have taken place where whole municipalities — and I gave you the example of the greater Napanee area where the residential taxpayers cannot understand that their assessment, in a lot of cases, has actually gone down yet their taxes have somehow gone up anywhere between 50% to 100% or more. That is taking place.

We've got the whole downloading situation. We've already heard from the member for Northumberland tonight who said: "Well, that's what the Association of Municipalities of Ontario wanted. They went along with it." Yes, they went along with it because they preferred half the downloading that the province was originally intent on doing.

When you take all of these situations into account, plus the current market value assessment situation that is affecting a lot of the properties around the province as well, you can only come to one conclusion: The province didn't know what it was doing, it didn't listen to the sound advice given by these various organizations, the people who work with this on a day-to-day basis, and somehow it hopes — and this is what they're really hoping for — that the general taxpayer out there, be they residential, commercial or industrial, will be so confused that they will take it out against their local councils and somehow Mike Harris will get off scot-free. I, for one, certainly hope it isn't going to work, because that isn't what happens in real life.

I would like to take a few moments to read you some — and this letter just came out today, December 2, 1998, from these four organizations, three of whom are the representative organizations of the professional civil servants in our municipalities. I'd like to read you some of the comments they have made with respect to the property taxation system in this province.

They say: "Bill 79 is a complex piece of legislation." There's an understatement if I ever heard one. "It certainly does not appear to support the government's objective of an assessment and taxation system that is fair and understandable to ratepayers." Can you imagine? These are municipal civil servants saying this. "Instead, it is an overreaction to a manageable number of property tax increases. Our evaluation is that it does not afford the protection for small businesses that it was intended to provide."

Listen closely to that. In their letter to the Treasurer of Ontario and to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the clerks and treasurers, the municipal finance officers, the municipal tax collectors are telling the province, "Our evaluation is that it" — Bill 79 — "does not afford the protection for small businesses that it was intended to provide. Our associations are opposed in principle to Bill 79 in its entirety." That is in heavy print.

This isn't the first time these people have told us. For the life of me, I cannot understand why the finance minister or his officials have refused to meet with these people. They had a plan laid out in a 14-page document that I tabled here, I believe about three or four months ago, in which they actually showed how a rational changeover could take place without some of these huge, tremendous, totally ununderstandable — anyway, you couldn't understand what was happening.

Let's just go on to see what they say. A little bit further on it goes on to say: "Collectively, our associations have significant concerns with Bill 79. It is imperative that the municipal tax billing process not be further delayed or complicated, as this has already resulted in tremendous costs to municipalities in 1998."

When you think about it, most municipalities set their budgets anywhere from about January to April. Usually the last tax bills that went out, or at least the tax bills that actually reflected whatever increases or decreases there were in that municipality, used to go out sometime in May or June. There may be a couple of instalments after that, but the actual tax rate was usually reflected in a tax bill no later than May or June. What's happened this year? You may recall the tax bills didn't go out until sometime in October or November, and in some municipalities they still haven't set a budget for this year.

Remember how the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Finance on more than one occasion said, "Oh, there's no cost to municipalities." Well, our municipal civil servants don't seem to think so. They go on to say: "This must not be allowed to spill over into 1999. The legislative timing prevents adequate time to respond to the bill, nor to fully examine the potential impacts of the capping provisions."

1950

You must recall that not only has the government once again invoked closure on this bill; it doesn't even want to hear from anybody by way of public hearings, which is totally unusual. I think 95% of all the bills I've been involved in in the last three and a half years have usually had a public hearing component to them, once they've

gone through second reading. The government doesn't want to do that. It basically only wants clause-by-clause debate on one particular day, and that's next Monday.

Speaker, you and I know from the track record of this government that they're going to get it wrong again, because they won't listen to the people who actually know how to implement what they want to do. All they want to do is just create confusion.

That's about all I want to say about Bill 79, because we are here tonight to discuss Bill 81.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: I notice that the member for Chatham-Kent is applauding that, but your member spoke for 20 minutes on Bill 79. I've only taken about 12½ minutes.

There are a couple of other comments, though, with respect to this budget bill. Remember, it's a tax bill, so we're very leery because it's probably not the last time we'll see this tax bill. It's a bill that goes on for 118 pages and deals with everything under the sun. There are actually a couple of things I like in it.

I like part II, the Community Small Business Investment Funds Act, which makes some changes with respect to community small business investments, the labour-sponsored investments and the Working Ventures investments. I think those are good investments. It's a great opportunity, because of the various tax credits that are available to individuals, to invest in those kinds of initiatives, particularly since the money stays right within the various communities, or at least within Ontario, and it makes small business grow and prosper and create jobs. I like that. These are basically housekeeping changes, but at least I like that particular part of it.

The Ambulance Act we've already heard about. I've got another little clipping here. Not only are you making local councils now pay for ambulance services, but up in Halton — my gosh, this must be Halton day here at the Legislature or something like that. The headline in the Hamilton Spectator today screamed out, "'Get Out of Our Face,' Province Told," with respect to ambulance costs. What the people of Ontario should understand is that for the next year or two the ambulance services are still going to be run and operated and managed by the province, but the local municipalities are going to have to pay the price for it. I always thought — what's that old expression? He who pays the money should call the tune. I don't think that's the way it goes exactly, but it's something like that.

Mr Christopherson: He who pays the piper calls the tune.

Mr Gerretsen: He who pays the piper calls the tune. Anyway, that's not happening here, and Halton is extremely upset about that. I don't know why this government, on a continual basis, just wants to upset the local councils and the regional councils out there. The local councillors are, after all — and you know of what I'm speaking, Speaker, because you were a local councillor as well — the closest to the people.

It used to be, when we had relatively small forms of government throughout most of Ontario, that your local councillor was no farther away than one concession road

or two or three blocks over in an urban municipality. You could actually discuss the issues of the day with your local councillor and hopefully some of these items would be raised at a council meeting and you could influence the public policy that was set at the local level. Of course, we're rapidly losing that with these larger and larger governments that are being created under the guise of saving money but that are really costing a lot more money. We're seeing the exact opposite. We've already talked about that as well.

The other interesting one, of course, is the one dealing with estate taxes. I know there have been a fair number of articles written in the paper about the fact that — I don't know what the record is in a provincial Legislature anywhere in the world, but we surely must have reached a new high or low, depending upon how you look at it, in a tax grab by a government in this particular bill.

You may recall that there was a court case about three or four weeks ago at the Supreme Court level that basically decided that the estate taxes that have been collected by the provincial governments and that were significantly increased under the Rae government — they increased them by something like 200%. The probate fees used to be about 0.5% of the value of the estate and they were increased dramatically, if you had an estate over \$50,000, to 1.5% in the Rae days. The fees went up tremendously. It's like the land transfer tax on the purchase of new homes. At one time people didn't realize — "I never paid those taxes." I'm a lawyer and I've dealt with a lot of clients over the years. People who bought a house 25 years ago said, "I never used to pay land transfer taxes." Oh yes, you did, but in those days you may have paid \$20 or \$30; it was a little bit. Now of course in many cases it's \$2,000, \$3,000 or \$4,000. The same thing happened with the probate fees. The probate fees went up significantly as a result of what the Rae government did some time ago.

Anyway, the court said: "That's not right. You cannot change a tax like that without bringing in legislation. You cannot do it by way of regulation." The reason for that is, it is more than just a probate fee. A fee is intended to somehow pay for roughly the cost that it takes to supply the service that is required. Of course, when probate fees are \$4,000, \$5,000 or \$6,000, and the actual work that's involved is maybe of the value of \$100 to \$200, it's no longer a fee for that service but it's more in the nature of a tax. So the court said: "Province, you've got to pay those fees back. It's not right that you did this." By some estimates it may be as much as \$1 billion.

What does Mike Harris, the Taxhiker, do? He has included a little clause in this bill that says, "We're going back to 1950, and whatever probate taxes have been charged since that time, they're all going to be made legal." That's surely got to be the world's record, going back some 48 years to try to collect taxes in situations where a court has, strictly speaking, told us that they were illegal.

The legacy of the Harris government will be the fact that this is actually the biggest tax grab and the biggest tax hike of them all.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): Come on, John, they've already been collected.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm sorry; it's like saying, "OK, judge" — or whoever was involved in the court case — "you won, but you lost anyway, because now we're going to change the rules of the game." It's not a fair way of doing it. The province stands to gain \$1 billion in taxes that it shouldn't have collected in the first place.

Interjection: Get real, come on.

Mr Gerretsen: This man says, "Get real." Well, sir, Mike Harris will from this day forward be known as the only Premier in this province's history who actually went back 50 years in order to collect taxes. That's the legacy he will leave to the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Gerretsen: I know my Tory friends get extremely excited about it, but that's the fact. Just read the bill. He's going back 50 years to collect taxes that never should have been collected in the first place. With that, I will simply retire at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Christopherson: I want to commend the member for Kingston and The Islands for his very clear and passionate speech. He also mentioned a number of times the member for Wentworth North and his remarks, which I believe gives me a parliamentary segue to comment on those myself once again.

It's one thing to be given the honour and the opportunity to sit in this place representing your home community, in my case Hamilton, and feel the responsibility of promoting the interests of your community and defending your community whenever it's under attack from anywhere. But I'm still seething, as I stand here, at watching someone who is from our own community — because the member for Wentworth North is still a citizen of the region of Hamilton-Wentworth, and when he wasn't taking cheap shots at Hamilton city council proper, he was taking cheap shots at the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth. Quite frankly, it's tough enough to be as close as we are in Hamilton to Toronto and get the kind of attention that our community deserves, and given the population base of close to half a million people, without having, if you will, one of our own stand up and fire those kinds of cheap shots across the bow of our own hometown.

Instead of doing what that member did, why didn't he stand up and defend the fact that the \$36 million that our community says we were shortchanged by this government is accurate? The numbers that were compiled were done under the leadership of the former CAO of the region, whom you just hired to be the new Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs. Those numbers are as accurate as any numbers that you're putting out from your government, since he's a part of it. But instead of doing that, they attacked our community and got a headline from the Hamilton Spectator that said, "Local Tories Abandon Community," and they're supposed to be their friends.

2000

Mr Carroll: A few comments on the speech made by the member for Kingston and The Islands, who pined at great length about the loss of local councillors. I'd like to tell him that in my community of Chatham-Kent we lost a bunch of those local councillors. We went from 156 down to 18, so that math is about 138. But the citizens of Chatham-Kent are much happier with the \$11 million that we found for them rather than the loss of those 138 councillors. I would suggest to the rest of the province that maybe they should take a look at more losses of local councillors.

I have to make some reference, though, to his rather strange comments about the estate tax and the probate fees. He knows full well, and he should have been just a little more straightforward with the people of Ontario, that for 50 years the government of Ontario, governments of all stripes — Liberal, NDP, Conservative — have collected probate fees. A judge ruled, during the tenure of this particular government, that those probate fees collected over the past 50 years were in fact contrary to the law. That judge or any other judge could have made that same ruling during a term of the Liberal Party, during a term of an NDP government or during a term of a Conservative government. It happened in 1998. The government is faced with the situation of deciding what they should do with those. Any government of any stripe would have made the same decision: to change that probate fee to a tax and leave it at the same level so the taxpayers aren't impacted.

However, I would assume, from what the member for Kingston and The Islands said, that the official position of his party now will be that they will eliminate this whole area of taxation, and that will be a position that I'm sure we will hear the member for Kingston and The Islands state. It's unusual for the Liberals to state a position. I'm sure he will on this particular issue, though.

Mr Cullen: I'm pleased to give some comments on the fine speech made by the member for Kingston and The Islands. One of the difficulties on this side of the House is that there is unfortunately so much to criticize of the government's initiatives.

Mr Lessard: And so little time.

Mr Cullen: "And so little time," is said to me. Here we have Bill 81 before us today, which is finally to follow up on the budget provisions seven months ago. We're on the cusp of leaving in a couple of weeks' time, so this bill is going to have to be rammed through. It contains a large number of provisions, some of which ought to be severed out, and the member for Kingston and The Islands was unfortunately unable to get to the point of talking about that section dealing with teachers or the other section dealing with ambulances or the many other sections. His points about probate are certainly relevant. Mind you, it's a fault that all governments since 1950 have had to carry. But here it is; we're trying to deal with it today.

I personally am very concerned about one topic that the member for Kingston and The Islands was not able to finish off, and that was the idea about land ambulances being transferred over to the regions. I just want to quote

again the letter from Bob Chiarelli, chair of the region of Ottawa-Carleton.

"The region of Ottawa-Carleton accepts its responsibility for full service provision of land ambulance services in the year 2000. It does not, however, accept the current very poor service provided by your ministry. This new information" — the independent audit that I have here — "very clearly demonstrates the fact that the region of Ottawa-Carleton has been downloaded an inadequate service, insufficient funds, and once again highlights the critical importance of including regional control of the ambulance dispatch process when this program is downloaded."

Dispatch is the very thing that's missing here. How can you talk about an integrated system if you won't allow the devolution of dispatch to the —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr Parker: I listened with interest to the comments of the member for Kingston and The Islands, as I listened with interest to the comments made earlier by the members for Northumberland, Hamilton Centre and Wentworth North. What distinguished the member for Kingston and The Islands from those other three was the utter unhelpfulness of his remarks on the subject of Bill 81. The other members managed to focus their comments on the bill itself and to put forward remarks that were helpful in developing an understanding and an appreciation of the issues involved in the bill. But I was quite surprised that the member for Kingston and The Islands would reduce himself to the level of suggesting that the correction of the matter of the collection of estate fees amounts to "Mike Harris reaching back in time to collect new taxes."

Mike Harris has not reached back in time to collect a nickel in this effect. What has happened is that over the course of many years, previous governments, the previous Liberal government, the previous NDP government and other governments, have collected probate fees and it was established that there was no technical basis for collecting those fees, and the technical basis for collecting the fees has now been corrected. No new tax is being raised as a result of that decision.

No one is going back in time to raise a nickel. All of that money has been raised. David Peterson has already raised that money, he's already spent that money and spent far more than that money. He spent money that hasn't been raised yet, and we still have to dig ourselves out from that legacy. The effect of the Mike Harris correction to the technical basis on which probate fees are corrected in no way whatsoever amounts to reaching back in time to raise a single nickel.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: I get a final comment.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, two minutes.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you, Mr Speaker. There were so many comments made, it's hard to know which one to focus on first. It's like saying to the people who were involved in the court case, "You won, but you lost." The least you could have done was no longer to collect the

taxes after the judge said it was illegal to do so. You basically tried to legitimize something that clearly has been found to be illegal.

I still challenge the member for Halton Centre — I was kind of disappointed that he didn't get up here and say anything, because he is in the House and he was in the House for most of the time that I spoke — to come forward and do what he said he was going to do to the regional council of Halton and to the four chambers of commerce in the area: to bring in an exemption for Halton. He said he was going to do it when he met with all these people, and I was hoping that tonight he would say he was going to do it, but we haven't heard that yet.

Let's go back and to what the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario and the municipal finance people have to say in very summary form in their table of contents. They say what Bill 79 does not do: "It doesn't cap tax increases at 10%; it doesn't provide protection for small business; it doesn't target properties that are hardest hit; it doesn't recognize local efforts and local solutions; it doesn't provide fairness for property taxpayers; and it doesn't address the rebates to charities." This is not my propaganda. This is from the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers and the finance officers who run each one of our municipalities and look after them in an extremely competent way from a financial viewpoint.

What it does do: "It increases municipal costs; it increases ratepayer confusion; it delays current value assessments; it further delays tax billings; and it erodes the gains in federal payments in lieu." I'll just leave it at that.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

2010

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity tonight to stand and speak on this bill and connect it to the budget of this government. In fact, the direction that this government is taking this province in speaks for some short time on the impact that direction is having on the lives of most of the people who call Ontario home and work in this province and contribute to the economic and social and spiritual life of the communities that we all feel so very proud of as we speak of them here and represent them here, that make up the fabric of the province that we call Ontario.

This is yet another massive, complicated, omnibus bill from a government that just doesn't seem to be able to get anything right. We've seen over the last week or two in this place — I know the nights that I've been here listening and speaking to various bills — one bill after another coming forward to correct some mistake that was made previously, to solve some problem that was generated by this government, by a piece of legislation that wasn't well thought out, that wasn't well prepared, that didn't allow for the kind of consultation and input and processing that we've come to expect in this place over a long number of years and that we have all supported in many serious and significant ways as we've tried to make Ontario the best province in the country, and by way of that, Ontario con-

tributing to a country that is the envy of many countries across the world.

This bill that we're looking at today is an attempt by the government to round out, finish off a package of initiatives in the budget that is contributing to what has become known over the last two or three weeks in this province because of the study that was done, the excellent study that was done by the social policy committee of what used to be the old Jesuit Centre for Social Justice, where they speak about the growing gap in this province between the rich and the poor and the disappearance of the middle class.

That's a reality that should bring sober second thought to any thinking person in this province. Anybody who is seriously interested and concerned about the loss of themselves, their family, their neighbours or their community ought to sit up straight and pay attention when they are told in such a very simple, understandable, clear form that there is a significantly increasing, growing gap between the rich and the poor in this province and that the middle class is disappearing. It is directly tied into the budgetary agenda of this government, laid out for the first time for all to see in the Common Sense Revolution before the last election.

Everybody saw that when it first came out as rather base and didn't really give it too much thought. But having come to government in 1995 in such a dramatic fashion for all kinds of interesting reasons as you speak to people out there — mostly people voted for this government in the last election because they played into that sense of fear, mistrust and resentment that seemed to be building at that time in this province in the thinking of at least enough people to have elected this government. I don't think they realized when they elected this government to hurt somebody else, that in fact at the end of the day it would turn around and get them too.

That's what this study is saying very clearly, that there aren't too many of us, if we allow this to continue, who won't eventually be caught up in the net of the growing gap between the rich and the poor. It's interesting, when you look at the numbers and the graphs in that study and you see that, yes, this is a trend that has been growing for the last five, 10, 15 years in this province and across the country, as we bought into the Thatcher-Reagan approach to economics and economic development around the world, that Ontario and Canada would slowly but surely lose their grip on some of the more fundamental, basic infrastructure pieces that made our country and our province such a wonderful place to live in, to work in, to bring up kids in; that that was starting to slip between our fingers, starting to get away from us.

It's just in the last three years that we've really begun to see that shift happen in a very dramatic and quick way for a whole lot of people. I think people out there are beginning to feel it too. I think that this government is in haste now to wrap up a whole lot of things, to put a nice wrapping around it, to put a nice bow on it and to deliver it re an election campaign that I'm sure we will see in this

province within the next six months. Some say it'll be in June; others suggest that it'll be earlier.

When you look at what this government is doing by way of this bill, trying to tie up some loose ends, trying to put a lid on some things that potentially will cause some difficulty down the road, and to keep it all together until they can get through an election, while there are still enough people out there who think that perhaps this is the right thing to be doing, just a little too fast, just a little too much, getting a little too close to home, I think the government will find that they're really not fooling too many people. In fact, if they spent more time on the streets of the communities that they represent; if they did what so many of us on this side of the House, particularly in the NDP caucus, are doing these days, which is knocking on doors and walking the malls and shaking hands at workplaces and plants as people go to work in the morning, they'll find that there aren't very many people any more who aren't anxious in some significant way about their lot in life.

There are a growing number of people in Ontario who do not have —

Mr Guzzo: How is Bob Rae, Tony?

Mr Martin: Bob Rae is doing fine. He was in the Soo last Tuesday night and we had a great time. The people of Sault Ste Marie came out in great numbers and they're telling me that they're going to vote for me in the next election. Do you know why they're going to vote for me? Because they know that what the New Democratic government of 1995 did for Sault Ste Marie at Algoma Steel and St Marys Paper and the ACR, and the list goes on and on, we will do in spades for the rest of the province because it'll have to be done by whatever government comes after this present government. Sault Ste Marie understands that.

Did you know that last Wednesday in Sault Ste Marie —

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): Do you believe in Santa Claus, Tony?

Mr Martin: Yes, we do in Sault Ste Marie. He comes in the shape of Bob Rae and the NDP government.

Last Tuesday night he came back to Sault Ste Marie. The day after he was there, interestingly enough, coincidentally enough, St Marys Paper, the company that Bob Rae almost single-handedly, at the end of the day, saved, gave a \$36,000, on average, bonus to every worker who works in that mill. Phenomenal.

Let me just give you a little peek into the role that Bob Rae played in that restructuring. Those people, management, workers, financial institutions, the new owner, were sitting around the table for a number of weeks trying to hammer out a deal. At the end of the day, they decided that they couldn't and they were leaving town. I remember hearing it. Somebody phoned me from the Holiday Inn, saying, "Tony, it's falling apart." I jumped in my van and I drove down there to almost be bowled over as they came out of the door, heading for God knows where. I tried to talk to somebody, and I couldn't, so I went back home and phoned Bob Rae.

I said: "Bob, it's falling apart. After all the work we've done, after all the time that was put in, after all the energy, the leadership and the effort, it's falling apart." He said to me: "Tony, it's not over till it's over. Not to worry. All those people are coming to Toronto. They're getting on planes. They'll be in Toronto tomorrow and I will gather them up. I will make sure that phone calls are made. I'll get them in here and we'll see what we can do."

The next night at midnight I got a phone call. It was Bob Rae calling to tell me that they'd done a deal, that he would be landing at the airport the next morning at 6 o'clock and I was to pick him up, because he wanted to come in and tell the mayor and be part of the group that would have to sit down and convince the workers that this was in fact in their best interests.

2020

Last Wednesday, St Marys Paper, as I just said a few minutes ago, announced a \$36,000 bonus for every worker because now they're part-owners of that plant. That was part of the deal. They gave up somewhere between 10% and 20% of their wages so that deal could be cut. Some five years later they're getting a \$36,000 bonus for Christmas. Santa Claus came to Sault Ste Marie last Wednesday night for the workers at St Marys Paper and their families.

Has anybody been able to find even very slight traces of an economic development policy from this government, of an industrial policy? Does anybody know? Nothing. They just let the market decide. If the market had been left to decide the future of Sault Ste Marie in the early 1990s, you know what we'd have now. It would be a shadow of the community that it is now.

Algoma Steel has reinvested half a billion dollars in new technology so they can take advantage of the new steel industry that will come at us in the next century. That wouldn't have been possible had it not been for an interventionist government, a government that believed in people, a government that was willing to say in front of some pretty tremendous odds: "We can do something. We're not paralyzed. We're not useless in front of these things that come at us. We have a concern and an interest and we have a job to do."

We have a government over there that doesn't think that they're government. Can you imagine? They don't think they're government. The Premier is on record as saying that he doesn't think they're the government; they're there to fix the government. I tell you it presents as a problematic scenario to me.

This budget that we're wrapping up today, that we're trying to put a cap on, that we're wrapping up in Christmas wrapping and putting a bow on so we can get it ready for the election that's coming in the new year is taking us down a path that is diabolically opposed to the kind of thing that happened in Sault Ste Marie, Espanola, Thunder Bay, Sudbury and Kapuskasing and almost every major community in northern Ontario —

Mr Lessard: And Windsor.

Mr Martin: — and Windsor. Completely the opposite of what happened in those communities is where we're going with this government, with the budgets that they

present and with the agenda they speak of when they do some kind of a speech in this House to show a vision or a direction.

There is absolutely no economic development plan. There is absolutely no industrial plan for Ontario coming out of this government. It's, "Let the market decide." It's, "Let's go to Japan and see what they're doing over there" and "Let's go to Germany and see what they're doing over there. Then when we come back we'll hook up with their buddies on the golf course and we'll talk to them." According to them everything's going fine — the stock market, my mutual funds, we're all doing OK. But you know, you're not paying attention to the guy on the street. You're not paying attention to your constituents. You're not paying attention to the person who is working on the plant floor, who is becoming increasingly more anxious, more nervous as time goes on and as this government continues its devastation and destruction.

There isn't a person in Ontario today, I suggest to you, who isn't worried about their future. There used to be a time in Ontario when there were jobs that you could aspire to, jobs that had some longevity to them, that had a benefit package and a pension package, that you could look forward to retiring from, that you could grow into and get good at. You could go away and take courses and come back and know that job was going to be there for you.

That's not the case in Ontario today. The Ontario that we're moving into is an Ontario where most jobs will be short-term, contract, part-time, low-wage, no benefits, two or three jobs at one time, catch-as-catch-can. That doesn't speak to me of stability or confidence; that speaks to me of a Third World country, a system that generates nothing but the lowest of common denominators, no matter what area you look in, whether it's social or health care or education or environmental or work standards, the whole bag of tricks. That's where we're headed.

The people out there that I certainly give a lot of credence to, that I have listened to over the years as I've grown as a citizen of this province and this country and tried to contribute to in the way that I can with the gifts that I have and that I tell my children about, that I hope other children are being told about in schools — that approach to citizenship, that approach to what it means to be a good, participating, active member of a community is slowly but surely drifting away from us as we see the gap between the rich and the poor grow in this province and as we see the middle class disappear altogether.

I was going to say that it was only in 1996, after this government came to power, that for the very first time in the history of this province — the gap between the rich and the poor was always fairly wide. Nobody is denying that. It was always fairly wide and growing at a pace that should have been troubling to all of us. But for the first time, in 1996 the poor, the bottom end, the bottom group of citizens in that graph, began to lose ground.

It was in the summer of 1995 that I personally had my biggest awakening re what this government was going to do and what it was about. I read the Common Sense Revolution and I debated in the election of 1995 with my

competitors the right and the wrong of slamming the poor, of taking money away from welfare people, of taking services and programs away from those who are most marginalized and vulnerable in our communities.

I argued that and we had a really good discussion —

Mr Guzzo: Because you guys had it right.

Mr Martin: — but I never, ever, Judge, thought in my wildest dreams that you would actually go ahead and do that. I didn't think that morally or ethically anybody could get away with taking 21.6% out of the income of the poorest families, food from the mouths of children, clothes off the backs of women and children in communities like Sault Ste Marie, Ottawa, Windsor and downtown Toronto. That was the first real dramatic example that all of us had of what this government was going to be about, because you said that was your high-water mark, or as others might say, your low-water mark.

After you did that, you showed yourself as the bully you truly are. You walked into the playground, you looked and you picked the scrawniest and the smallest kid you could find and you beat the tar out of him. You said to the rest of the province: "You're next."

Mr Young: A third of a million off social assistance.

Mr Martin: A third of a million off social assistance because you raised the bar and you changed the rules and none of them could qualify any more. That's what's happened to social assistance. It's absolutely disgusting. It's absolutely morally and ethically out of step with anything this province has seen as right and just, certainly over the years that I have lived in this province, and I'm sure, if you look around this place, anybody else will say that too.

Completely opposed, taking us down a road that I think we will regret. I think we will look back on the three or four years that you folks have had as government as the black spot in the civil life of the community of people that calls itself the province of Ontario. That's really sad because it doesn't have to be that way. It does not have to be that way. But the people of Ontario will have a chance within the next six months to cast judgment and they will — trust me, because I'm talking to them — give you a message that you will not be able to avoid.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

2030

Mr Galt: It's interesting to hear the usual speech from the member for Sault Ste Marie. It doesn't matter what the bill happens to be; he's always on the same topic, and it's just on and on, the same kind of drivel we hear from him.

He talks about the address we had for social services, for welfare, that our program is totally out. He tends to forget that we're still 10% above any other province. We're way above the average across Canada. As a matter of fact, we're way above anyplace in the world, and any time any other province wants to come up to ours, then maybe we can start discussing raising the bar a little further.

You're more interested in having people sit at home on welfare than you are in having them get out and get a job. That was the point you were making when you were in government, and it's unfortunate, when you were debating

with that other good Conservative in your riding, that that good Conservative hadn't won and added the 83rd seat here at Queen's Park. Nevertheless, that's the way it goes; congratulations on the fact that you ended up winning.

By having people get out and work for welfare, they are now feeling good about themselves. It's an opportunity for them to get a good recommendation and be able to go out and get a job afterwards. If it hadn't been for unions, the people you continuously support, there would be a lot more of these people out doing work for welfare. There are women and men pleading for the opportunity, but you have been out there shooting them in the foot, not giving them the opportunity, discouraging organizations from coming forward to give that opportunity so there can be work for welfare.

There is just no question that there are so many people thrilled with the opportunity to go out and prove themselves so that down the road they can get a job. That's why we have created over 400,000 jobs in this province in the last three years.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I want to commend the member for Sault Ste Marie. The comments he brought forth today were really about what Ontarians are expecting from this bill and from this government.

The 1998 budget was designed to distract people from the past three years of cuts. With an election but a year away, Mike Harris wants Ontarians to forget about his broken promises. He wants you to forget the chaos he has caused, and he wants you to forget how he has refused to listen to your concerns. Mike Harris boasts about 36 new tax cuts, but he is silent on the 35 hospitals they have slated for closure.

Let's remember that Mike Harris has done to our hospitals and our schools. Mike Harris chose to fire over 10,000 nurses, he has plans to close 35 hospitals, he has made deep cuts in our classrooms and he has denied 60,000 four-year-olds the benefit of junior kindergarten.

When we look at the goal of this government, a 30% personal tax cut, let's not forget Ontarians are going to pay for every service they are getting. If you cannot afford the service, you don't get the service. Let's remember. I have a few examples in my riding. Yesterday I received a phone call. The library in Bourget was open only two days a week. Today they are planning to close it. They don't have any more money. Closing a library in a small town — it's like having a ghost town.

Mr Lessard: It's always a pleasure to listen to my colleague the NDP member for Sault Ste Marie debate in this House, a member who speaks with compassion and with a sense of caring about his own constituents, a member who says there is a downside to the market-based solutions that are always being proposed by this government. That downside is that there are some who will sink and there are some who will swim. The member for Sault Ste Marie cares about those people who are going to sink because of this government's market-based solutions and he talks about what a government can do and should do to

help those people a market-based approach is not going to protect.

He talked about some examples that the NDP government was involved in, St Marys Paper and Algoma Steel, where government intervention saved thousands of jobs in his community, jobs that continue to exist, for which people are well paid, and as a result that community is continuing to prosper. In my own community in Windsor, there's a similar example, where we established Ontario's first casino, an undertaking that is now permanently employing 6,000 full-time people, plus all the other spinoff jobs.

The member makes an excellent point that there is a role for government to play in economic development. You don't just leave it all to the private sector and the markets to come up with every solution, because we have seen what has happened. We see the growing gap between the rich and the poor. We see what has happened in places like Mexico, Brazil, Japan and in Asia. Those economies are suffering now because they have gone down this road. It's not the right road; it's the wrong direction.

Mr Skarica: I just want to respond to the member for Hamilton Centre, who indicated a few moments ago that I had taken cheap shots at the local politicians. In fact, I never mentioned any names, but if I could just quote what they themselves are saying, in an article in the Hamilton Spectator on Wednesday, October 21, 1998, the chairman of the region, Terry Cooke, is quoted, "Cooke Says Politicians Have 'Failed' Taxpayers." The article indicates "that politicians — himself included — have failed the voters and taxpayers of Hamilton-Wentworth."

Mr Cullen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I thought the comments were to be made on the speech to the House by the member for Sault Ste Marie. It is too late to comment on the comments made by the member Hamilton Centre.

The Deputy Speaker: I was listening very carefully to him. I'd like to see where he is going with it.

Mr Skarica: Continuing then, "Region Wants to Cut Tax Rates: Exodus of Businesses Feared," and there is a quote from one of the local mayors, Flamborough Mayor Ted McMeekin: "The simple reality is that if you take an average of seven areas around us...we're about 40% less competitive in terms of our tax rates."

One of the areas in which the region has been very successful in saving money in the last two years is in welfare costs —

Mr Lessard: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: The member is obviously not commenting about the member for Sault Ste Marie's speech; he's making comments about Hamilton-Wentworth and the speech that was given by the member from Hamilton. It doesn't have anything to do with the remarks from the member for Sault Ste Marie.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order on speaking towards the debate at hand. The member for Wentworth North is speaking towards Bill 81, and it's my understanding that that's the item he is commenting on.

Mr Cullen: It's comments and questions.

Mr Martin: Come on, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to remind the member for Sault Ste Marie and the member for Ottawa West that when I'm standing up and talking, you don't. I will not warn you again.

I'm listening to the comments of the member for Wentworth North under comments and questions, and he is commenting on the effect of Bill 81 to his regional municipality, the same as the member for Sault Ste Marie brought his comments within his own community in Sault Ste Marie. My ruling is that I am allowing the member for Wentworth North to complete his time.

Mr Skarica: The member for Sault Ste Marie is talking about welfare. The point I want to make is that locally in my area, due to the policies of this government, the region has saved \$35 million in the last two years due to our policies. That's a very positive change. A lot of people have left welfare and have saved the taxpayers of our area a lot of money.

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The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie has two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: You know, Speaker, I sometimes just can't believe what I hear in this place.

I want to thank the members for Northumberland, Prescott and Russell, Windsor-Riverside and, even though he didn't speak to my comments, the member for Wentworth North for taking the time to respond. It's always good to have back and forth in this place.

I'm always amazed that this government actually thinks that what they're doing in the area of what they call social assistance reform is helping anybody but their rich friends, who are getting a tax break because of the money they're sucking out of the pockets and out of the homes of the poorest and most marginalized and most vulnerable in our communities.

I don't know where you're living. I don't know who you're talking to. I don't know where you're hanging out when you go home on the weekend. But the people I talk to are telling me that they're worse off, that they're having a heck of a time. This business that they're all going back to school —

Interjection: You need a new set of friends.

Mr Martin: I need a new set? You need a new set of friends. You need a reality check. You need to get out of whatever it is you're in and get back into your communities and get back on the streets and talk to real people. They will tell you that they're not happy, that they're uneasy, that they're anxious, that they're nervous about their future. They don't know, even if they have a job, whether they're going to have a job in a year or two years from now, because of the course you've set us one.

The poor — somehow, you'd think to listen to the government members that they're out there and everybody's got a job and everybody is doing well, but that's just not true, they don't. You've raised the bar so high that they can't get over it. You've changed the regulations so they don't qualify any more. That's why they're not on welfare. That's why they're not getting money to feed their children. That's why they can't buy the clothes they need

come the winter. That's why there are so many people sleeping on the streets of Toronto. Wake up. Get a life. Get back into your streets. Find out what's going on.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. I'll just be a minute; I wanted to respond to the debate. We're getting on in the evening —

Mr Martin: You have to sit in your chair and take your turn.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I'm addressing my comments specifically to you. One thing that a very experienced member of this House pointed out to me was that when you skate on thin ice yourself, you shouldn't complain too much about it when others are on that thin ice.

Mr Martin: Point well taken.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Quinte for further debate.

Mr Rollins: It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak about Bill 81. Before I get into Bill 81, I want to ask a couple of questions, and I know from the noise of the crowd in here that we'll hear the answer.

The paper mill they saved in Sault Ste Marie saved some 200 or 300 jobs, and it certainly was a great success story. When Bob Rae and the government of the time did that, it was excellent. But there were some other stories, things they did to try to save some companies, that weren't successful. When the tally ended up at the end of their term, that government lost 10,000 net jobs in five years. How do you address those 10,000 people? Yes, you squeezed out the 200 or 300 that did get that big bonus and it was very complimentary that the paper mill was saved. But the other 10,000 net jobs that were lost in that decade — those are the people who are really upset.

Mr Guzzo: Bob's going to do another book.

Mr Rollins: Bob doing another book and saving another company will be quite something different.

Bill 81 is a tax measures bill, and there are some things in it: more tax cuts for Ontarians and small businesses to create jobs; assistance and accessibility to child care for working families with children; greater access to capital for small businesses; help for people with disabilities to get jobs; support for small, growing firms for job creation in the new millennium; and a fairer tax system. All those things are part of this bill.

Starting out with the bill to support jobs and the phase-in of the employer health tax exemption, some \$400,000 that we were looking at to phase in. We've increased the speed of that; we've moved it up to \$350,000 by the end of this year. By the end of 1999, on the self-employed it will be eliminated completely. That 5%, a payroll tax, was certainly a job killer, by all imagination. No one has stood up and told us that that tax did not discourage companies from hiring more people. It was a hindrance to small industry, to small businesses, keeping handcuffs on them and not allowing them to expand and put that money back into their company.

Those kinds of tax cuts for small businesses do make a difference for the people of Ontario, the small entrepreneurs who have four or five people working for them, a small business that has 25 or 30 people working for it. It

doesn't look like a lot of money, but at the of the year, it makes a difference that means they may be able to hire another person for five or six months or maybe for a whole year.

Another part of it was the community small business investment fund. In 1997 we announced that in some of the budgets and it was put into place. The community small business investment fund was to be set up to provide a greater opportunity to access investment capital for growing businesses with \$1 million or less in assets.

The labour-sponsored funds: Somewhere along the line, with the input of labour and the dialogue that we as a government had with their people, we saw that there was an opportunity for these people to make an investment in these companies, to make an investment in the labour market and to make sure there was an opportunity to put it together so these smaller companies can make that. Individuals will receive a cash incentive of up to 15% on investments between the \$150,000 and \$500,000 range.

I know a lot of people say, "Those are very small companies," but those are the kind of companies that really need the little bit of help. They need an entrepreneurial spirit to be able to develop a new widget or whatever they're going to start to develop to make sure they can create those jobs, but they have to have access to that capital. When those monies are put down to a lower level, the bar is lowered a little bit, and they may be able to take that opportunity to make the technology that they can express into and go on and improve the opportunity for hiring more people.

Clarifying, the minimum size of the corporation is \$5 million and the maximum size is \$10 million. There again, it's just lowering that bar a little bit and allowing those smaller companies to make sure they can access that amount of money.

The labour-sponsored investment funds: We talk about labour and we dialogue with labour all the time. Here's an opportunity for these people to invest in the future of our country and our communities, growing small businesses so we can get into those companies, be part of them, put some money into them. That gives the opportunity, particularly for the labour-sponsored investment funds, to help out, other than just saying that we're going to create more jobs and we want higher wages and all those things that work towards that. As long as those tax credit claims are increased from \$3,500 to \$5,000 for the 1998 and subsequent tax years, it allows those people to invest a little more heavily into our own companies and to make sure the companies we're trying to invest in are the same companies that are trying to make a better opportunity for advancement and to hire more people.

Access to investment capital for small businesses: During the ice storm last year, when we had a disaster in eastern Ontario, the minister stood up and made an announcement that there would be an extension for putting money into RRSP investments, extending it for a month, because the ice storm, that disaster, was right at the 11th hour when those monies had to be sent in. We had areas, not in my riding but further east of us, that were out of

power. They didn't have power for a few days, the roads were in dire straits and the mail wasn't getting through.

So as the government, we saw fit to extend that ability for them to put in RRSP money for another month. A part of this bill moves that, making it become law that we can enjoy, that those people have the same opportunity and will not be breaking the law when they invest that money.

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Encouraging job creation for the new millennium: We've encouraged high-technology, knowledge-based industries, proposed tax initiatives to support interactive digital media, sound recording and computer animation and special effects industries.

These initiatives will help to try to create more jobs for the people of Ontario and for small businesses; for example, in the communities of Belleville and surrounding area. Whether they come to Belleville or come to any part of Ontario, when they open their doors and hire more people they certainly add to the thing that's called more jobs.

We have listened, and I've heard other speakers tell us, that in the last three and a half to four years — we're getting close to the four-year mark — there are over 400,000 more people working in Ontario than there were when we took over as the government. Yes, not all those jobs are the high-tech jobs we need, and they're not all making huge salaries, but they are jobs and those are people who are working. All that contributes to the well-being of the province to make sure that we're doing the kind of commitment to the people of Ontario that we as a government said we would do: creating jobs and giving the people of Ontario an opportunity to work. All the tax credits and all these things contribute daily to making sure that initiative is out there.

Enrichment of the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit: When we leave this place every night, by the time we leave here we can walk around and see the amount of film work that's being produced here in Toronto. There is hardly a night when, driving home, you can drive four or five blocks here and there aren't people out there shooting films and working in that industry. It's cradled, yes; it's a new industry, something that didn't start a long time ago, but it has created a lot of jobs in the province and they need to be encouraged to make sure those kind of jobs are made, to keep improving.

We are also eliminating the annual tax credit maximum of \$500,000 per associated group of corporations. All those kind of things give the opportunity to make sure that small businesses have the opportunity to keep on expanding and moving.

We have the Ontario sound recording tax credit. It would be a 20% refundable tax credit to Ontario-based sound recording companies for expenditures incurred after January 1, 1999, related to sound recordings by emerging Canadian artists. Once again, we're looking to the artists who need that help. We need to give them the kind of help and encouragement so that these people can go on and be encouraged to be part of the entertainment world, to be out there trying to make sure they can fend for themselves, making sure those people have that opportunity. Yes,

maybe a 20% refundable credit isn't a lot of money, but it will make sure those people still keep working. They need to keep being encouraged on that type of work.

Another small amount is the \$140-million child care supplement for working families to replace the \$40-million child care tax credit for lower-income families introduced in the 1997 Ontario budget. It will help a lot of families, particularly families on the smaller end and particularly families with children under seven years of age. When mom and dad are working, and you have small children at home under that seven-year-old bracket, it's very hard to make sure there are babysitters there for everybody to keep working. It's hard to keep mom and dad both working when they've got that problem at home, looking after young children.

This is another ability this government has looked at and said, "OK, fine, let's try to help those people out," particularly the people who are on the lower end of the scale so that those people can pick up \$1,020 per year for children under the age of seven. That kind of a reduction doesn't sound like a lot of money, but for those people who are only making \$20,000 a year, it's certainly a big chunk of that income. I think that really helps those families to be able to say, "OK, fine, we can afford to go to work." It's not the greatest job in the world, but it's just a little bit more encouragement, instead of taking all those monies away from them.

The workplace child care tax incentive: I think people want to go out to a workplace where companies are able to provide the kind of facility in that company, so that they can look after some daycare centres and child care, where the moms and dads are, so that their children are not very far away from them. They can certainly be involved to help out, and it's close to having those children at home. They may have worked there for five or six years and then all of a sudden they get married, a family comes along and they want to be able to look after that child. The company doesn't want to lose that employee, because they've spent a lot of time training that employee to make sure they know what's going on as far as the workplace is concerned. If they can encourage that mom and dad to bring that child to their place of work and look after them there, it makes it that much easier to make sure they can keep their people working there.

Helping people with disabilities: We look at supporting companies that are willing to put in chairlifts and elevators, that are willing to help people to work, whether they have to have an extra writer or whether they have to have some device that they need, encouraging these people to work. I know in my own community I've had people come up — we have Sir James Whitney School there, the school for the deaf, and many of those people are extremely good workers. They're very handicapped because they can't hear, and yet if you can convince a company to hire those people, they find out that those people are some of the best workers they've ever had. But they need special conditions, special abilities to be able to train with.

In this bill, we're allowing those companies to write off 100% of the expenditures they have, to make sure those people can be employed at that company. When you put in a lifter or a chairlift, or allow a person to be able to get around the workstation a little bit better, it all adds one more thing: It means that company is helping our community out by making sure that individual is looked after in the workplace.

We're allowing small businesses to write off up to 15% of the refundable tax credit. Those are not incorporated businesses. That's the little, small businesses that can spend that money. As to those people who spend that money to help those people out, I know those companies must feel awfully good at the end of the month or at the end of the year when they have taken that extra step to make sure that a person who has some major disabilities has the ability to work in that workplace.

Those people don't even have to work a full 40 hours a week; they only have to work 60 hours per month for a period of not less than three months. We have opened the door for those people and for those companies particularly that can go out and make some changes to make sure those people can be looked after. Those are the kinds of things we as a government should be very pleased with.

One of the other areas I'd like to touch on for a minute is the tobacco tax. We've had a lot of cigarettes come into our area with no tax on them. There have been charges through the RCMP and our local police. The amount of smuggling that's been going on has certainly been an underground market. Mr Speaker, you and me and everybody else in the province loses when that happens, because those people are cheating the tax man out of the dollars that should be put out so we can look after other people a little bit better and a little bit fairer. But no, it's become a large part of it, these wholesale dealers selling tobacco like that, unbranded cigarettes, untaxed cigarettes, under the counter.

It got so large, Mr Speaker, as you well know, that the federal government decided they couldn't collect all those taxes and couldn't stop all that smuggling that was going on in the tobacco industry, so they decided to lower the tax on it so it wouldn't make it nearly as profitable. I think that's the wrong way to go at it. If I had been in government at that time I would have been much more prepared to hire another 50 or 100 police officers to make sure that smuggling could be arrested, making sure that you stopped it, rather than taking the taxes off cigarettes or lowering them, so it wasn't going to be as profitable to smuggle back and forth and miss the tax man. As long as a government in Ottawa is prepared to do that, we have to say: "Okay, fine. We used to have fines of \$200 to \$1,000. Now we've increased those fines from \$5,000 to \$25,000, and the existing term in jail from three to six months." Those are the kinds of things we have to put in place, as lawmakers in this province, to make sure we can discourage all those people trying to beat the taxman.

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One of the other things I wanted to touch on, and I know it may not be in all of this bill but it's in part of it, is

where we've had some downloading as far as municipalities are concerned. In my community of Belleville, we had a meeting a few weeks ago. We had a lot of business people come out and tell us that their taxes had gone up to the point of 200% and 300%, that their taxes had doubled. As a government, we need to take a look at that.

Where the municipalities had not chosen to use the 1.5% cap or any cap whatsoever, we would have had a lot of business people in very dire straits if we were to allow it to happen. That's one of the things I'm very pleased with, that as a government we brought in a bill that put a cap on that and made sure the tax situation was alleviated. We did not allow those people to have 200% and 300% tax increases, making sure that those people were — it wasn't making sure, it was just forcing them right out of business. I think we've got to be able to deal with that.

One of the areas they talked about was the inheritance tax. The inheritance tax is something that it's probably nice to sit on the other side and laugh about, that going back some 40 years or so we've been illegally taxing people in this province, but I can tell you that the other two governments before us were collecting the same amount of tax as we are. We're not increasing the tax, we're just making it legal so we can continue to collect the same amount of tax that we have in the past. We're not raising any taxes, we're just making sure we can collect it and put it in the account where it has to be without a judge coming along and telling us we're collecting it illegally.

I want to thank you, Mr Speaker, for having the opportunity to speak on this bill. I'm sure we will support this bill 100% when it comes time to vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Lalonde: I'm going to get down immediately to the last point the member for Quinte brought to our attention, the downloading. It is in real chaos. At the present time the government has come down with Bill 79 to try to correct their error, but it's too late. The year is over. We're not even a month from the end of the year and the municipalities don't know where to get the money.

At the present time we have introduced Bill 79 to put on a cap of 10%, but where will the municipalities be getting the shortfall? In my own municipality, they decided yesterday to close the Chartrand bridge in Ettyville, a \$600,000 repair, because of what? Because of the downloading. They cannot afford to have this bridge repaired.

He referred to child care, \$140 million, in his comments. It's only good for families with \$20,000 in revenue or less. Tell me, what family that has two workers is not making \$20,000 a year? There aren't any. If you're on welfare, a single person will make \$20,000. So it looks good in front of the public but they will never gain from it.

Once again, the downloading: In my own municipality, ambulance is \$2.9 million; social housing, \$4 million; assessment, about \$1 million; police services, \$10 million. All that downloading to the municipalities, and you're going to tell me that this bill is going to correct everything? Bill 79 is causing a real headache for the municipalities. We will have to cut the majority of services. People won't have any libraries to go to, they won't have

any arenas to go to. We'll be closing every facility to be able to meet the ends at the present time.

The bill came out too late. You have caused the chaos, and the municipalities cannot afford to reinvest that money.

Mr Lessard: The member for Quinte was talking about Bill 81, An Act to implement tax credits and revenue protection measures, another one of those bills that has a nice-sounding title, talking about tax credits. The member made a long speech about how that's going to benefit taxpayers in Ontario, but a lot of taxpayers in Ontario recognize what this government's tax scheme really means to them, that many working families are paying for those tax breaks to those who are the most well off. They're paying for them through higher property taxes, through increased tuition fees and through cuts to the health care system as well.

A lot of people in Ontario are saying no to the Mike Harris tax scheme, the phony tax scheme that benefits those who are the most well off, and are looking forward to an opportunity to get rid of this tax scam agenda. We're looking forward to that as well.

One of the areas he did bring up that's in Bill 81 that I thought was interesting was taxation of cigarettes. He talked about increased fines. We think that's a good idea, but in order to ensure that higher fines are levied, they have to have people out in the field to do the enforcement work. Because of the cuts that have been made to the public service, there aren't going to be the people out there to catch the people who are breaking the law.

One thing this government should do is urge the federal Liberal government to support Bill S-13, to place a levy on every package of cigarettes sold in Ontario to be used to reduce the incidence of smoking in young people.

Mr Young: I've been listening very carefully to the debate tonight and what is very evident is that the NDP and the Liberals still don't get it.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): They never did.

Mr Young: They never did. They don't understand that you can lower taxes and more revenue will come in. I admit, it's hard to explain that to people. I was explaining it to a group of high school students on Friday night in my own riding.

Mr Lessard: Did they understand?

Mr Young: They did understand it after I explained it to them. What happens is, because we don't have a closed system, more people come to Ontario to invest and they start businesses. Other people, who perhaps would have liked to be in business but left when the NDP were in power, go back into business and they create jobs. There are other people who decided to take time off between jobs, who weren't working because they were depressed paying 65% of their total income in various taxes. Those people are back in the economy again.

The NDP and the Liberals, who spend most of their time arguing and fighting and writing and talking about how we should divide up the economic pie in our society, hardly spend any time at all, if any, talking about how to

make the pie bigger, how we get more investment into Ontario, because when that happens, everybody gets a greater share.

People are spending. They're optimistic. They're planning for their future. I honestly don't understand what the member for Sault Ste Marie was talking about. I don't know what people he's talking to, because the people I talk to are very optimistic. They're hopeful. They're now able to plan for their children's post-secondary education or save for a family holiday. They're optimistic about their future because there's every reason to be so. Some 440,000 more people have jobs since we became the government. They're very optimistic.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I promised Gary Carr's mother, who lives in Etobicoke-Rexdale, that I would speak tonight and offer at least two minutes, because she watches this all the time. I hope she's watching tonight. She'd be wondering, as so many of my constituents are, about Mike Harris and the probate fees. They all thought Mike Harris was about cutting taxes, so they're phoning up and saying, "Surely Mike Harris and the Conservatives will now be reducing the probate fees, or eliminating them, and giving all the money back from over the years when it was collected apparently illegally." Much as I wanted to tell them that Mike Harris was going to give it back, I've had to explain to them that in this bill Mike Harris is signing the note that says, "All those fees collected will stay with the Ontario government."

They may understand that, but they're asking, "Maybe we understand why a government can't give back all the money, but surely Mike Harris is significantly reducing the probate fee, or eliminating it." Alas, I have to tell them: "That's not going to happen. Mike Harris wants that money, because he has already given the tax benefit to the richest people in the province. He has given them the tax break, so he has to have the money." The poor widows and widowers and those who are involved in families where someone has passed away are going to continue to pay the probate fees. Mike Harris is not going to reduce those probate fees.

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The Deputy Speaker: The member for Quinte has two minutes to respond.

Mr Rollins: I'd like to thank the members for Prescott-Russell, Windsor-Riverside, Halton Centre and St Catharines. I hope the member for St Catharines doesn't change his mind and cut over to the idea of being a tax cutter because all of a sudden they decided they were cutting taxes.

If you look back in this little budget book, in 1994 the total revenue for the province was \$46 billion. If you look under 1998-99, it becomes \$53 billion. There's a difference of \$7 billion. That does not have anything to do with the \$5 billion we as a government gave back to the taxpayers. When you take what we gave back as a tax credit to the taxpayers of Ontario, yes, a small percentage of those people — 7%, they say — are over \$80,000, but those people are also paying an additional health tax that will compensate for the rest of the province.

The jobs we have created — they say, "If we had saved that \$5 billion we gave back as a tax cut, we would have had a balanced budget." I want to tell you, by the time we said we would have a balanced budget, I am confident this government is going to have a balanced budget. We're bringing in more dollars than ever before in Ontario. One reason is that we did give it back to the people of Ontario to put more money in their pockets to spend. That does create jobs, whether it's in Belleville or St Catharines or wherever. It still creates jobs, and they pay more taxes.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: The evening is wearing on. If you want to have a conversation, I'd like you to go outside the door. If you're going to have an argument, go a little bit farther. Further debate?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): God forbid that we should have an argument in Parliament.

I want to join the debate and pick up on a couple of the items mentioned by my friend from Belleville. He's quite right: This economy in Ontario in the last couple of years — actually three or three and a half years, the political cycle of which I note — has been very robust. Those with a political interest can take credit in whatever fashion they wish to. I remember the Harcourt government in British Columbia just a few years ago taking great credit for the BC miracle, and in a sense there was a miracle.

Mr Galt: They raised the taxes.

Mr Conway: It had much less to do with the domestic tax rate than it did with the collapse of the Asian economy. I think the public does expect a certain economic literacy in these debates. I don't quarrel with partisans supporting the current government, doing what we did 10 years ago, because quite frankly some of these circumstances look a little familiar. I remember taking office in 1985 and we had much better luck than the Miller government had had, and the Davis government, in the early 1980s. It had much less to do with us, quite frankly, than a very sharp uptake in the American economy.

Mr Young: Tell us about SkyDome.

Mr Conway: Listen, the guy who gets the credit about the SkyDome is Chris Stockwell. I want to say something about the SkyDome.

Mr Young: What about Peterson and \$600 million?

Mr Conway: Listen, there's lots of blame to go around on the SkyDome. I'm not going to deny that at all. I just want to make the point that if you go back and look at the literature of the times, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, it's rather like the nuclear commitment of a decade earlier: Big government, big business and big labour were all singing out of the same hymn book. This was a scheme that could not go wrong. There were people who said the SkyDome was a problem. I remember Chris Stockwell — he wasn't here; he was down at Metro council — was a harsh critic. But I can tell you, Paul Godfrey just swept him aside, as did most of the prevailing class of the time. I'm not here to quarrel. I'm a democrat; I'm prepared to accept —

Ms Mushinski: And the labour unions.

Mr Conway: And the labour unions, as the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere says. She's right.

My only point in saying this is there was a clear debate. There were people, smart people apparently, who stood up and said, "This emperor may not be fully clothed." You know what? They lost the debate. The Dome was built. It was initiated by a Conservative government, completed by a Liberal government, probably exacerbated by us in retrospect, but again, I think one has to be very ecumenical about the assignment of blame. The point is that there were people — good people, thoughtful people — who pointed to problems, and they were simply swept aside by the current of majority public opinion.

I want to come back to the point about the current state of the Ontario economy. It has been very good, and I think anyone who would look at this situation — the government has to get some credit, obviously, but let there be no confusion. Ours is an export economy, and 90% of Ontario exports go to the great American republic and the great Clinton bull market and the great robust —

Hon Mr Leach: What about BC?

Mr Conway: BC? Because of Asia. Just as you have to understand that the problems today with Ontario pork are to some considerable extent the problems of Asia.

I think it's important that we observe these matters, because we are an increasingly integrated economy. We've been very fortunate and I'm very happy. Let me tell you, my family is in the lumber business. When the American economy is strong my relatives do well, and most of my constituents engaged in the lumber and forest economy of the Ottawa Valley do well. We have been an export economy in the Ottawa Valley since the first European settlement came to this part of British North America. But the American economy has been extremely robust, and whether it was automobiles or lumber or other products, we have had a very good market in the United States. Let's hope it continues. It is going to be interesting in the next year or two to see what the so-called downturn in the American economy is going to mean. There are recessions as well as bull markets, and the American bull looks like it's losing just a little bit of its gusto.

I want to also come to a point that the member from Belleville talked about in his remarks, having to do with downloading. I want to hook my comments to part I of the bill, which deals with the downloading of ambulances. To give me an opportunity to address the concern — I'm very pleased the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here tonight. There is a situation in my county, particularly in my part of the county — I want to pay due regard to my friend Mr Jordan, who is here as well tonight. Downloading is a particular challenge in areas like southwest Renfrew county, for a reason I want to touch on tonight.

I do so because before coming to Toronto this week I met with the reeve, the chief magistrate, of the great united townships of Brudenell and Lyndoch, Mr Gilbert Welk.

Mr Young: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We're not debating Bill 79.

The Deputy Speaker: I've been listening very carefully to the member and I think he's bringing his comments within the bill very well.

2120

Mr Conway: Mr Welk made the point — and he is as a mayor in that rural municipality going to be faced with the charges that are now going to befall his voters for, among other things, the downloaded ambulance services, and it's just one of the downloaded services which the member from Belleville rightly mentioned are dealt with in this particular bill. The point Reeve Welk wanted me to address at an early opportunity in the legislative debate, I say with all due respect to my friend Mr Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, is the peculiar situation that municipalities in areas like Brudenell and Lyndoch, Hagarly and Richards, Raglan or Head, Clara and Maria in the county of Renfrew face, and let me be specific.

This is the problem of Her Majesty owning most of the real estate. Mr Welk is reeve of — and it's a very unusual situation, known to my friend in North Hastings, certainly known to the member from Lennox and Addington, because in southwest Renfrew, in North Addington, North Hastings and, yes, Haliburton, there are municipalities where Her Majesty owns anywhere from 30% to 80% of the real estate. In Mr Welk's township, Brudenell and Lyndoch, the crown owns 15,000 of 44,000 hectares. Roughly 33% of the real estate is owned by the government of Ontario.

Let me just give you some of the other statistics: In neighbouring Griffith and Matawatchan 70% of the land is owned by the province of Ontario; in Head, Clara and Maria, 83% of the land is owned by the people of Ontario; in Sherwood, Jones and Burns, an area around the village of Barry's Bay it's 50%.

You might say, what is the relevance? The relevance is simply this: Not too long ago the government of Ontario decided to take the crown lands off the tax rolls. They're no longer on the roll. So as we look at, for example, the downloading of ambulance services provided for in part I of Bill 81, it is now going to fall to ratepayers who own property or pay rates on property in areas like Brudenell and Lyndoch to pay for things like ambulances and policing and, in our case, in Renfrew a couple of hundred of kilometres of additional highways that used to belong to the county or to the provincial highway system.

Reeve Welk and the council and hundreds of people in my county who signed this petition want me to stand in my place today and ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and perhaps even more importantly ask the Minister of Finance, is it fair that Bill 81 imposes a new charge on the property taxpayers of Brudenell and Lyndoch and other municipalities in Renfrew county for ambulances, which they're prepared to pay if the deal is a fair one?

Where the reeve of Brudenell and Lyndoch rightly points to an unfairness is simply this: How do we possibly justify exempting the biggest single property owner in the township from his or her responsibility in paying their fair share of those costs? Surely the argument of the government's new policy with respect to property taxes — and it's an argument that I accept; I understand at least theoretically and I don't necessarily accept totally, but I understand — is that if you own the property, you've got to be

willing to pay a greater share of particularly the hard servicing costs, the roads, the fire, the police.

That's the argument, and I understand that argument, but how do you in an area like Brudenell and Lyndoch say he or she who owns 30% of the real estate — actually it would be a third, so it's 33% of the real estate — gets a complete exemption? In fact, Reeve Welk tells me that in Brudenell and Lyndoch they get a grant in lieu of \$14,000, and I gather most of that is for a provincial waterway park along the Madawaska River, which is partly in the township of Brudenell and Lyndoch. If you take that \$14,000 provincial grant in lieu that the township of Brudenell and Lyndoch receives and measure it against the 46,900 acres — I presume that translates into 15,000 hectares — Reeve Welk tells me that means the province of Ontario is paying about 30 cents an acre for the 46,900 acres which the government of Ontario owns in that municipality.

Minister, I ask you to think seriously about the peculiar situation which these municipalities in southwest Renfrew, North Hastings, North Addington and Haliburton face as a result of what is admittedly a rather unique and anomalous situation in southern Ontario, namely, that the provincial government owns a very large amount of the property in those counties.

Mr Young: Even Gary Carr's mother is falling asleep.

Mr Conway: The member from Halton wherever says people may be falling asleep. Let me tell you — and Mr Danford, the good member from Hastings, understands this because this is all about tax impact. Can you imagine a situation in Halton region or in Kent county where a landowner had something like 30%, 40%, 50% or 60% of the land or the real estate and managed to take themselves off the tax roll at the very time we were saying to people who own property and pay rates on that property, "You must expect to pay a greater share of costs like policing, fire protection and roads"? It is simply not sustainable. It's not fair. The reason it has been allowed to pass to this extent is because it is so unusual.

I talked to a number of my colleagues and they can't imagine — they don't know what I'm talking about. Most people think when I raise this subject I must be talking about the grants in lieu; I'm not. I'm not talking about grants in lieu. I'm talking about that situation in our part of southeastern Ontario where the crown owns so much of the provincial land, and it's more than that. In Brudenell and Lyndoch, I say to the minister, not only does the crown own 33% of the land, but the crown is actively developing that land in the name of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

If you're the municipality, what you see are MNR vehicles running up and down the roads, you see logging

trucks and forest operations, which we are glad to have. Most of the revenues, by the way, go to Her Majesty's provincial government in Toronto. So it's not just that the crown owns land that lies dormant, the crown is an active manager of those lands, particularly insofar as the forest economy is concerned, and that development activity creates costs, road costs, policing costs, fire protection costs, real costs.

You can amalgamate a number of these municipalities. You could take Brudenell and Lyndoch, Sebastopol, Radcliffe, Sherwood, Jones and Burns and put them all together and you wouldn't change the tax base. You wouldn't change the fact that in that part of southwest Renfrew even a great big municipality would still have probably in excess of 35% of the land owned by the provincial government.

In the old days, the way we dealt with this anomalous situation was in part, largely I would argue, through the unconditional grant program. You look at a situation like Griffith and Matawatchan township where you've got 70% of the land owned by the provincial government, you would simply recognize the budgetary and fiscal pressures that would be put on the local government and you would compensate for that by a rather generous unconditional grant. That's gone. In fairness to the government and the minister, they will argue, "We've got some transitional funding to help along the way," and I appreciate that, but it doesn't change the fundamental reality.

As time runs out tonight, I just simply want to use this opportunity in all seriousness to ask the House again, and the minister particularly, to hear the pleas of my constituents in areas like Brudenell and Lyndoch. Reeve Welk is a very good, highly regarded local reeve and he managed to get something like 1,000 signatures. People who hear this expect that a fair government, of whatever political stripe, is going to recognize the special circumstances in which these communities now find themselves. The old grant programs are gone, but the tax situation and the land tenure situation remain. It is simply not possible for any of us in this House to argue that you can own as much real estate as we in right of the government of Ontario own in municipalities like Brudenell and Lyndoch and simply exempt ourselves from the charges that arise for everyone else by virtue of that kind of ownership.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: My thanks to you. I was going to let you finish out your time. Are you finished?

Mr Conway: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10:am tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 December 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 décembre 1998

*The House met at 1002.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CITY OF TORONTO XXIX SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES BID ENDORSEMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 APPUYANT LA CANDIDATURE DE LA CITÉ DE TORONTO CONCERNANT LES XXIX^e JEUX OLYMPIQUES D'ÉTÉ

Mr Kells moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to endorse the proposed bid of the City of Toronto to host the XXIX Summer Olympic Games /
Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à appuyer la candidature que se propose de présenter la cité de Toronto pour accueillir les XXIXe Jeux olympiques d'été.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I rise today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill 77, An Act to endorse the proposed bid of the City of Toronto to host the XXIX Summer Olympic Games in the year 2008.

The bill recognizes that Ontario's participation in the bid process is a necessity if it is to be successful. This involvement can only be sustained through mutually acceptable terms enshrined in an agreement between Ontario and the organizers of the Toronto proposal. The bill also asks all municipalities in Ontario and citizens of Ontario to support the bid on a voluntary basis.

In my estimation, this bill is no ordinary offering under our private members' rules; rather, it is my summation of why and how the people of this great province can come together to show the world that we are united as one behind the bid of the city of Toronto to be the nominated host of the XXIX Olympiad. I will say nominal host because the very rules of the International Olympic Committee call for support and guarantees from the senior level of government under which the host city functions.

Perhaps at this point I should make mention of the wonderful efforts that have been put forth by David Crombie and his original group of supporters, who were appropriately called BidCo. Over a year ago, Mr Crombie assembled a group of interested business people and

activists from all walks of life who shared one common goal: to attract the Olympic Games to the city of Toronto. As a matter of fact, at that time Premier Harris also pledged his support.

Last April, the Canadian Olympic Association listened to the detailed bid proposal and agreed to support the Toronto plan. Mayor Lastman was also present in Calgary for the meeting and lent his enthusiastic support to Toronto's dream to host the Olympic Games.

To solidify the COA's decision, it was necessary for the city of Toronto council to pass a motion in support of the BidCo application and to sign an agreement with the COA. This approval was received in July of this year and the subsequent agreement created the new entity known as TO-Bid.

As I mentioned, one of the rules set by the International Olympic Committee is for the host city to have a guarantee from the senior level of government. This necessity is covered in the agreement that forged TO-Bid. I mention this during our debate because it is the driving force behind the necessity to have this agreement, as I mentioned, between the province and TO-Bid, and it's a stipulation called for by the IOC.

As you may expect, no enterprise of this magnitude can be successful without the efforts of hundreds and thousands of Ontarians, but more importantly, it must be led by community leaders who represent all facets of what makes a city vibrant, practical and economically viable. In this regard, we are fortunate to have Steve Hudson, chair of the board of Newcourt, in the key role as chair of the executive committee of TO-Bid. He is, of course, ably supported by Mayor Lastman, David Crombie and Carol Anne Letheren of the Canadian Olympic Association. Fourteen other key Torontonians make up the committee, and on them falls the onus of leadership and dynamics necessary for any successful enterprise.

The executive committee presides over subcommittees, and each subcommittee deals with a vitally specific area, including villages, venues, community relations, finance and administration, fundraising and others. This group is also supported by a board of directors of almost 100 significant individuals who cover the spectrum of human endeavours in the city of Toronto.

As many of you know, this is not Toronto's first try at hosting the Olympic Games, and there is a background of experience to call upon because of our initial attempt. The first bid did not receive unanimous support from the community, and a group known as Bread Not Circuses, funded by the city of Toronto council, journeyed to Tokyo

to speak against Toronto's application. This unfortunate occurrence in effect sealed the doom of Toronto's hopes to sponsor the 1996 games, which went to Atlanta instead.

Ironically, the failure of the games to come to Toronto did not lead to a markedly better society, for we still have homeless people and food banks in our communities today. Nonetheless, David Crombie and his group of dedicated supporters learned a lesson and have taken steps this time to make the bid all-inclusive so that all elements of society can feel that their concerns are heard and met. For this I am thankful, and I believe that all members of the Legislature understand and share this approach this time around.

1010

Preparing a bid is no simple matter, and it requires not only the approval in principle of the public at large, but a great deal of money too. Under Steve Hudson, and with the cooperation of Jim Ginou, Paul Godfrey and others, a substantial effort is under way to raise the \$40 million that is estimated to be needed to prepare and illustrate to the IOC delegates and the world that Toronto is serious and totally committed to presenting the best training facilities, venues and infrastructure for athletes that any city can provide. You can be sure that the world will be watching to see what improvements will be made to our infrastructure to best meet the demands, and the huge influx of competitors and spectators will require that. It's too early to guess at what changes will be made, but hopefully governments, citizens' groups, businesses, cultural organizations and the average Ontarian will all be pragmatic in support of what has to be built.

To ensure that our citizens enjoy the maximum benefits from bidding for and hosting the games, this bill includes clauses that call for agreements between the bid organizers and Ontario. Such an agreement was recommended in the report prepared in 1991 after the failure of the bid for 1996. I note that critics and supporters of that previously unsuccessful enterprise all contributed to the list of recommendations contained within the report. This list includes such varied names as Michael Shapcott of Bread Not Circuses, Jack Layton, Dick Pound and Carole Anne Letheren. My bill simply moves to enshrine this advice in law.

The agreement will promote the equitable distribution of venue sites across the province, as called for by this bill. The participation of Ontario's communities in the presentation of the games is an important way of welcoming the world to our diverse province.

The agreement will also contain a management plan, as suggested by the 1991 report. This plan will include methods for dealing with the daily activities involved in producing the bid and how the games should be administered.

As you know, I was appointed Ontario Olympics Commissioner in July by Premier Harris, with a mandate to support the bid to the fullest while protecting the interests of the Ontario taxpayers. May I gently remind the House that Toronto taxpayers are Ontario taxpayers too.

Toronto now faces strong competition from Beijing, Osaka, Monterrey in Mexico, and others. These competitors will challenge us to develop a technically superior bid that highlights Toronto's and Ontario's ability to deliver a memorable games. Once again, I believe this is attainable.

So I call upon the members, indeed my colleagues on both sides of the House, to unequivocally pledge their support for the 2008 summer games. The IOC, through the COA, calls for a sports and cultural legacy to be left behind upon the completion of the games, and this means equal opportunity for Ontario's towns and cities to participate and to build new facilities tied to the Olympics. Successful applicants will then be able to create opportunities to fund the sites to be built. There won't nor should there be any restrictions on creativity that may be used by potential applicants for the use of their community infrastructure.

The Olympic Games are universal in scope, and the Toronto bid should reflect the ability of our citizens to compete with the world when it comes to flair, innovation, messaging, volunteerism and presentation.

The rewards in pride are worth the efforts to win worldwide support. Perhaps I can best illustrate this by using the experiences of the Barcelona games in 1992 as a guide. That ancient Mediterranean port city in Spain has literally transformed its urbanscape in less than a decade, after years of decay. The city is still enjoying huge tourist influxes. Additionally, they now have a 21st-century commercial port facility, modernized rail service, new industrial sewers and a superb recreational waterfront.

Honourable members, I call today for your unanimous agreement that we may move forward together with the confidence that we too can make this possible. We can make the games ring and the world sing in harmony with us.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I rise today in support of the honourable member's motion and to perhaps give you some of the experiences that we've had in Kingston. Kingston, as you may know, is the only Ontario city that has so far enjoyed the Olympic experience, hosting the sailing events for the 1976 Olympics at that time. Let me just tell you a little bit about some of the pitfalls and some of the dos and don'ts that we were able to come up with.

Let me start by talking about the benefits. On an annual basis in the Kingston area, at the Kingston Olympic harbour, we still host about 10 international sailing events that bring sailors in from around the world. The main event I suppose is the annual CORK event, Canadian Olympic Regatta Kingston, in which 1,100 to 1,200 sailors take part annually in the regatta that takes place over a two-week time period. The economic benefits to our area and to the city are immeasurable. Of course, we like to boast that one of the reasons why the sailing events were held in 1976 in Kingston, outside of the province of Quebec, farther away from Montreal than Kingston is from Toronto, was the fact that we have the best sailing conditions in the summer, the best wind conditions that

sailors need to make for attractive races. We, as a matter of fact, like to bill ourselves as the freshwater sailing capital of the world.

I first got involved in this in 1973 when, as a newly elected councillor in Kingston, I opposed the Olympic bid. I was one of only two councillors who opposed it, having been raised and brought up within about two or three blocks of the Olympic site.

The thing that turned it around, which Toronto has already had experience with, with respect to an earlier bid, was the mayor at that time immediately set up a post-Olympic users committee and had the broadest consultation possible under the chairmanship of the late Leonard Dover, a prominent business individual in the Kingston area, and they were able to allay many of the fears that individuals and organizations had about the Olympics.

As a matter of fact, through tremendous co-operation of the provincial government, the federal government and COJO, the Canadian Olympic Organizing Committee, a facility was built that was worth at that time some \$7 million and is probably worth well over \$15 million to \$20 million today. The province paid for the land acquisition, the federal government paid for the harbour development, and the Olympic organizing committee paid for the onshore buildings.

What's extremely important is that there has to be strict financial controls. Many of us may still be paying for the Montreal Olympics in one way or another through our income taxes, but we in Kingston were the absolute benefactors of a \$7-million facility without a penny of local taxpayers' dollars. The reason for that was that there were good financial controls. Nothing was being built or done in the Kingston area without the money in the bank to do it.

Second, I urge Mr Kells to be really true to the concept of inclusiveness, getting as many people involved as possible, and that he be just as concerned about the after-use of a lot of the Olympic facilities that will be with us for many generations to come, rather than just about the two- or three-week time period when the Olympics actually take place.

Others will speak to the other economic benefits of the Olympics, but I can tell you that it has placed Kingston on the map. We get sailors from around the world. The harbour itself is probably one of the most unusual sights, having as a backdrop the Kingston Penitentiary, which is certainly unusual for a sailing facility and a harbour-like setting.

We in Kingston feel we have the expertise to run the sailing events, the capital structures are there, and we would simply ask Mr Kells to speak on our behalf to the organizing committee, as I know has already happened, to make sure that the Olympics, if Toronto should be successful, are run in as economical a fashion as possible. I can tell you, sir, we have the expertise in the Kingston area, through our many thousands of volunteers who have run these competitions on an annual basis for the last 30 years, to run this kind of competition. All the capital

facilities are in place, and I know we will do a bang-up job.

This will really put Toronto, Ontario and Canada once again on the map, and I too join the Olympic commissioner in urging all the members of the House to support this unanimously and to be sure that the people of Toronto and the people who will be using the facilities that may be made available for them afterwards are integrally involved in every step along the way. There has to be a united effort shown if we don't want to repeat what happened in Tokyo some six years ago.

1020

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm pleased to rise today to indicate my support for Bill 77, introduced by Mr Kells, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and the commissioner for the Olympics on behalf of the government of Ontario, and to say to him and to all members that as a member from Toronto, as he is, we look forward to Toronto hosting the 29th Olympic Games.

We agree that there is a tremendous opportunity here. I personally believe that, and I know many of my colleagues share that view. We will certainly give our support to this legislation and to the drive that's behind it. We do have some concerns that I want to speak a little bit about, but I also want to say very clearly that we raise those concerns in the light of seeing the tremendous opportunity that lies ahead.

Whenever any venture of this kind comes on the horizon, there are two ways in which you can approach it. You can approach it by saying: "It's going to cause disruptions. It's going to cause problems. Therefore, here are 55 reasons why you shouldn't do it." Or you can approach it in the way that I believe we should and the way in which the Olympic committee organizers are approaching it, which is to say: "This is a tremendous opportunity. There are a number of issues and a number of concerns that have to be addressed. Let's see how we can address those in the most inclusive way, in a way that deals with those issues up front in the early stages of the process by bringing people into the process and by ensuring therefore that as the bid goes forward, it has not just the formal support of the different levels of government but indeed the broad support of the citizens of Toronto particularly and of the province as a whole."

I would agree that while the games would be hosted principally by Toronto were we to be successful in this bid, the glory, the glamour, the benefit that would come from that would not stop at the city boundaries of the new city of Toronto. It's with that spirit that I stand today to indicate my personal support and I believe that of many members of our caucus, those who will be able to be here to express their own support for this bill.

In terms of the legislation that's in front of us, I would echo what Mr Kells said in terms of the requirement that one of the things that happens is that there be a guarantee of support from the senior level of government; in this case, the province of Ontario. Obviously, that could have happened without a bill such as this coming in because the government can indicate its support in the House and

outside of the House simply as a matter of policy. I say that as a way of showing that I appreciate that we have this bill in front of us. I think it's even more significant if we are able, as I believe we will be able this morning, to show that there is not just the formal support of the province's government, which is important and necessary, but the support of members of the House from all parties. I believe this bill will succeed in doing that. I thank the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore for bringing forward this bill because it does give us that opportunity to formalize that support here in this Legislative Assembly.

There are some issues that we want to raise. I don't think these are issues that are strange to people. They are issues which the Olympic committee organizers are well aware of. I hope and believe that they will pay attention to them. But there are also things to which the government will need to pay attention.

During the Olympic period we're going to need some additional housing. We want to make sure that as the planning for that takes place, we don't get ourselves in the situation where we displace people who might be now in certain types of accommodation. That's an issue that has to be addressed carefully. We want to see that as new housing is built, if such is the case — and I presume some will have to be done — there are then provisions for that housing stock to be made available in an affordable way to people following the Olympics. I would say that in terms of all facilities. I agree with Mr Gerretsen in his comments about the experience in the Kingston area and that one of the most important pieces of this is how we approach what will happen to the facilities after the Olympics. That has to be kept very much in mind.

We of course would want to see and hope that the staffing for the various jobs that will be available will follow the principles of employment equity, and that the diversity that we have in our population will be reflected. We want to make sure the Olympic facilities, as I believe will need to be done, will be accessible to the disabled, and that another aspect of accessibility is also dealt with. That is the availability of tickets to people here locally. In some of these worldwide events, that is an issue that continues. I remember in the last major world sporting event, the World Cup in France, there were some concerns around the issue of tickets and how those were being made available in terms of balancing the need to make them available worldwide and also to the local communities.

Obviously, we believe that in any new development with respect to the Olympic facilities, the new environmental technologies need to be kept very much in mind, and can be, in terms of what's possible, using that as a showcase for what can be done and what can be built in a way that looks to the future.

There is the whole issue of accountability in terms of the dollars that are spent, predominantly private dollars, but also to the extent that public dollars will have to be spent, and I expect that at the end of the day some will have to be spent, there must be clear accountability guidelines and, with respect to accountability, this continuing approach which we are heartened to see has begun

between the formal committee and the rest of, not just the politicians at different levels, but indeed the broad citizenry.

If that happens and that continues, I believe that whatever concerns people have can be dealt with in a way that they can be addressed constructively, up front, early on in the process. They will not then become the barriers and the obstacles that will lead, as happened in the past, to certain groups being diametrically opposed, and to some extent that playing some factor in terms of the decision being made at the end of the day as to whether Toronto will receive the games or one of the other cities competing for the Olympics will receive the games.

As I say, I see this as a tremendous opportunity for the Toronto area, for the province of Ontario and for Canada. I am heartened by what has happened to date. I have some concerns about what will happen from here on in, but I am confident and optimistic that those concerns can be addressed if the goodwill we have seen so far continues.

I encourage that goodwill to continue formally by the committee organizers and the members and the leadership of that committee, and certainly Mr Kells, in his capacity as the Ontario Olympics Commissioner, to continue to oversee and to make sure the government support — and indeed what I hope will be the Legislative Assembly support that he will be able to take forward if we pass this bill today — is continued in that spirit of collaboration, cooperation, and the very open approach to dealing with the concerns and problems up front early on so that we can all be proudly part in 2008 of having said we were fortunate to have an opportunity to indicate and lend our support in the early stages for this very important event.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It is a pleasure to rise today and speak about Bill 77.

Before getting into the bill, I'd like to congratulate the Premier on his choice of the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore as the Olympics commissioner. The commissioner's ongoing dedication to sports, whether it be lacrosse or hockey, I know from personal experience. I owe him a personal thanks because it had been 11 years before coming to this Legislature, and I was convinced into getting the blades on and playing hockey again. I owe that to Commissioner Kells, and I want to thank him personally for that.

When the Olympics issue first came forward, I tried to think about how very specifically I could find some events that Toronto may not be able to avail to the Olympics so that we could bring it outside of Toronto and look at something. I started doing some research and found something that quite honestly was of question. The shooting events, the Olympic trap or the Olympic skeet, were the first events that came to mind that I didn't think Toronto had the facilities for. When I started doing research, I found that they were actually allocated outside of Toronto because they could not provide that facility within Toronto.

At that time, I looked through the local clubs and facilities and found that the Oshawa Skeet and Gun Club

was extremely supportive of having the ability to provide those facilities outside during the 2008 Olympics.

1030

Along with that, there were requirements for training facilities. Within that area, mostly in the riding of the member for Durham East, Mr O'Toole, there were both the Oshawa club and the other, the Orono Fish and Hunt Club, the Port Perry club and the Pickering Rod and Gun Club, all within about 20 minutes. Part of the requirement for a site is having alternative sites and training sites. These sites offered the ability to perform those events as training events outside and still have the Oshawa site as a main location.

When I checked, I found that the actual site that was put forward by the original commission was the Borden site, and to my knowledge, they did not have any of the requirements for skeet and trap at that location, although I could be corrected.

When I approached the Oshawa club, there was overwhelming support for bringing the events to Oshawa, not only from the club itself but from the industry as well. At that time I brought the commissioner out to Oshawa to see the facility and what was available there.

There were certain requirements for parking, for seating etc, and the Oshawa club has most of those facilities available at this time to comply with the Olympic requirements, which is something that will certainly help promote and bring an Olympic event to the Oshawa community and help the process along, in that the site may be fully available already.

Not only was there support from the club, but the commissioner who saw the facility was rather impressed with all the requirements that they currently were able to fulfill, and also the local chamber and the economic development office were fully supportive of bringing the events to Oshawa.

There are some of the effects the Olympics will bring: for example, a \$2.7-billion impact will result from planning and construction activity from the operation of the Olympic Games and from visitors who come to Ontario for the games. Another thing I'd like to mention is the fact of 30,000 person-years of employment in the three to five years leading up to and through the games, and some of the things the member for Kingston and The Islands said about the ongoing support and having the facilities available.

I think that the Calgary example, about the Winter Olympics that took place there, and the training facility that was utilized for the bobsled team and built in Calgary has shown that in future Olympics those sorts of facilities brought to Ontario will certainly help in the long run; not only that but ongoing events and sponsoring international events will help a lot of the other communities around.

One thing I would like to emphasize — I know there are other members of our caucus who would like to speak, so I'm going to be very brief — is on page 2 of the bill, subsection 3(1), "The desire to host a part of the Olympic Games is one of the ultimate forms of support; Ontario represented by the members of the elected assembly

confirms that all municipalities may offer their communities and facilities as potential sites for use as practice sites or venues during the games." I think that in itself will certainly help promote bringing all the events, and I think this aspect may help all events be spread around the province, because truly it will be the province that benefits from hosting these events.

I thank the member and I congratulate him. I hope all members support this, because I think it is going to be a huge benefit for the province.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I am pleased to join with the other members in supporting the Olympic bid and supporting the act. I guess all of us have had experience with Olympic programs. One of those was with our family in Montreal, and it was a totally memorable experience for all of us, something we still reflect on all these years later.

In Atlanta, one of my sons and I decided we would go down just on the spur of the moment and drove all night one Thursday night, arrived in Atlanta, actually found a motel room cheap — \$55, I think — and attended events. Fortunately we were there on the magical Saturday when Canada won, I think, two golds and one silver in rowing, and we then went that evening to Olympic Stadium to see Donovan Bailey win that fantastic race. Although Atlanta was criticized for the games, for us it was a magical experience.

During the last bid by Toronto for the Olympics, as a member of the Legislature at the time, I had an opportunity to work as one of the people helping to encourage the bid, and I would say to Mr Kells that there were some very good things in that bid. One of the strengths of it was taking advantage of the enormous diversity in Ontario. Without a question of a doubt, we are blessed in this area to have people living here who have come from virtually every country in the world and know, obviously, many of the important IOC members personally. I hope that the bid committee once again involves the entire community and takes advantage of the enormous opportunity we have to bring the world to Toronto to see this rich diversity.

I'm also supportive because it is an opportunity for Toronto, but I might say for all of Ontario, to look at itself and at the strengths and weaknesses of our social and cultural situation and our infrastructure and determine what things we need to change and improve. The bid will force us all to look at what things are working well here and what things aren't working well. I hope also that the bid does what I know we plan to do, and that is to ensure it's more than just a Toronto event. We happen to cottage in the Haliburton area and there is a terrific white water course there for kayaking and what-not. I would think that area could benefit. My colleague from Kingston and The Islands has already talked about Kingston. It is an opportunity to showcase the diversity of Ontario as well.

The final thing I would say is that I think it's important to recognize that there will be those who are not fully supportive of this bid for their own quite legitimate reasons. One of the challenges of the bid group will be to

listen to those concerns, because they're legitimate concerns. I think people do worry, for good reason, about cost overruns and what the taxpayers will be left with. It's important for the bid committee to address those issues, to involve those people and to provide assurance on that.

I know that with the announcement that Beijing will be competing for the games the knees sag a little bit, because they will be a formidable competitor, but we're in a political environment and all of us have gone into proposals and elections where it may look like we're a little bit behind, and things change. I hope that the committee's knees don't buckle at all at the fact that Beijing is competing and that they will simply say, "Listen, that just makes us work a little bit harder," because things, times and events change.

I look forward to being as helpful as I can to the bid committee, and I have already said that in writing many months ago. I'm supportive of it. As I say, I hope we do not ignore the voices that have some concerns about it and that we address those legitimate concerns, and that we take advantage of what I think is perhaps our greatest strength in this bid, and that's the rich cultural diversity we have here where we can speak to IOC members and say, "Listen, there's no where in the world where your athletes will feel more at home and more welcome than in Toronto and in Ontario." I'm pleased to lend my support to this private member's proposal.

1040

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On behalf of our caucus, the NDP caucus, I would like to add my voice in support of this bill. First of all, congratulations and best wishes to the member who brings forward the bill. I think it's an important issue, not only for the city of Toronto and the benefits it will give to Toronto economically, but for the province as a whole, both economically and also to enhance our ability to train athletes, to get people involved more keenly in sports themselves.

I want to make two points. I want to add this to the record because when we get them, there's always a legacy after the Olympics and that's what I want to speak to.

The first thing is that we know we're going to have to build some sort of Olympic village or find some way to accommodate the athletes once they come to Toronto. The only thing I would caution the committee about when doing that is that whatever housing arrangements they make for the athletes, it should be done in a way that we can then convert those units to rental units, hopefully non-profit, back into the city of Toronto. We know that we have a housing shortage here in Toronto. As a matter of fact, because of rent decontrol we saw rents go up 7%, and the reason is very simple: There are not a lot of apartments out there. If we get the Olympics, I think it's an opportunity to build some much-needed non-profit housing, and we need to do that in a way so that we know we can convert it easily afterwards.

The second point is that one of the great strengths Toronto has is the ethnicity of the city. We have people from all around the world who reside in our cities and participate in our communities. I just would want us to

reach out to all of those people to make sure that our bid attempt really puts forward the face of Toronto, which is very diverse when it comes to various cultures of this world.

With that, I would like to wish the member good luck, and I look forward to having the Olympics come to the city of Toronto.

Mr William Saunderson (Eglinton): I would first of all like to congratulate my colleague Mr Kells for the great work he's doing on behalf of Ontario as the Ontario Olympics Commissioner.

I am pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 77. This legislation endorses the Toronto Olympics bid and asks that all municipalities in Ontario also support the bid. It makes sense.

I am wearing a pin today, and I notice that many other members here are wearing the same pin, for the bid by Toronto for the 2008 Olympic Games. I think it was a very nice touch of Mr Kells to provide us all with those pins today.

My wife, Meredith, and I were very involved in the 1996 bid by Toronto. I know from that experience that if Toronto is going to be successful in this bid for the 2008 games, the province must be supportive, and seen to be supportive right from the outset. This is obviously what is going on in this House today and I'm glad to see such support, and it's important that it get registered very quickly.

I was in Tokyo, along with my wife, and we could see that support by all aspects of a jurisdiction is very important. We were particularly impressed with the support that Atlanta had from all aspects of life in that region.

Had Toronto been successful in winning the bid for the 1996 Olympics, I want us all to think of the facilities that would now be in place around Ontario. There would be sports facilities, housing, more transportation, as well as the spinoff jobs that would have been created. Think about it, because it the possible the way that the economic downturn we experienced in Toronto and in Ontario in the early 1990s would not have been as severe as it was had we had the added economic activity that the Olympic Games would generate. Certainly Atlanta's gain was Toronto's loss.

From an economic standpoint, it is a win-win situation for Ontario and Toronto to have the 2008 games. An estimated 30,000 jobs in the three to five years leading up to the games would be the result.

Tourism is an important part of our economy. A city of Toronto report which was prepared in February 1998 estimates that 20,000 jobs in the hospitality and retail sectors will be generated. Think of the added long-term advantage that the exposure generated by the Olympics will have for Ontario. Olympic viewers around the world would see all that Ontario has to offer because, as previous speakers have said, this will not only be for Toronto, it will be for all of Ontario and the venues.

It is estimated that the economic impact generated from the games, if we were to be successful in achieving them, would be approximately \$6 billion — a large amount of

money. That also represents a large number of jobs for Ontarians.

I'm a great believer in the value of sports and physical activity for young people — for older people too, of course, but I want to emphasize just what it does for young people: It provides them with competition — our world is now full of competition; it embodies the desire to do your best — we need the brightest and the best people in Ontario; it develops team spirit — all people are members of the Canadian team; and it embodies the will to win. I think that exposure to the Olympic experience is a gift to our youth that we can give to them by getting these games.

I know all this because my son Brian participated as a rower in the 1992 and 1998 Olympic Games. The entire experience he had made a tremendous impression on him. It made him focus on his life and on his goals. One of those he has now achieved by becoming a lawyer. I'm not so sure this would have happened without that Olympic experience. This will happen for all of our youth. There's an enormous amount of work that goes into preparing for the bid process, and there are many factors that make up a winning bid. A great many volunteers give unstintingly of their time, and the Olympic committee and all those involved deserve our official support and our moral support as well.

Of course, there are concerns about the impact of a project of this magnitude on our communities and how we will balance the needs of Ontarians against the pressures of a project of this size. However, due to my good friend David Crombie's hard work and his committee's hard work, extensive consultation and research have been done. I'm confident that if we are successful, everyone will benefit in Ontario.

I'm proud of Ontario and of what we have to show to the world. I can think of no better way to showcase Ontario than to host these Olympic Games in the greater Toronto region.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I also want to speak in support of the bill presented by the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore in support of the XXIX Olympics here in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. After all, we have been told by the world that we are the best country to live in. I believe that Toronto, Ontario, has participated in and contributed on a very large scale to this title that we all enjoy. Indeed, we deserve it. I think Toronto deserves to lead the world in 2008 to have the summer Olympics.

I congratulate the commissioner, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, for very promptly presenting this bill to the House and getting the support of all members. As the commissioner, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore knows, we have some hurdles with respect to the agreement between the province and the city of Toronto. That entails some commitment on both parts, especially in the economic area, where even though we may not say that we don't want to trouble the people of Ontario with debt and stuff like that, I believe it's an area where we should be looking at contributing money and making sure we get the 2008 Olympics here in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It is

our way of supporting not only the actions of the commissioner, but also the members of the IOC, to have a very successful bid and bring the Olympics to Toronto.

They are played in the summertime, of course, and it is a time when we are going to have many economic benefits. Especially during the summer a lot of our young people, students, look for summer jobs, and other jobs will be created; I'm sure long-term jobs will be created as well. It will be an opportunity for us here in Toronto and in Ontario.

I encourage the commissioner to include the active participation of the other regions, the other municipalities, and make this not only a Toronto event but an Ontario event as well. We not only have wonderful natural beauty here in the summertime, I have to say that within an hour or an hour and a half, we also have wonderful ski hills, where we could show the rest of the world what we have in Ontario. Of course, we have the wonderful mountains in western Canada, but I think Ontario also has wonderful winter activities. In support of my members, we have natural facilities, natural beauty all the way from Kingston and the Islands, the Bay of Quinte, to Niagara Falls.

1050

This would be a wonderful opportunity to say yes, to offer our support to the member and this bill, to the city of Toronto, and to the committee that is doing great work in trying to bring this Olympic bid to a successful conclusion. I think we are ready; we are ripe. We are already on the world map, but this will be the icing on the cake and show exactly who we are, what we are and show this part of Ontario, Canada, and Toronto, show what we really represent.

I believe that it already has been mentioned that we should do a couple of things to improve our situation, especially with respect to housing, but all in all I support the bill. I congratulate the member. Let's hope all members will do the same.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I'm pleased to be able to speak on this bill today. It is a good PR bill, I think; it's a feel-good bill. I'm glad to see the provincial MPPs discussing the Olympic bid so it doesn't just remain a discussion in Toronto. Obviously, for a massive undertaking such as an Olympic bid, we need to have all levels of government in support, we desperately need that, and we need all Ontarians to be supportive and for all Ontarians to see the benefits to them, not just Toronto. That's one of the reasons why I'm glad to have this before us today.

One of the main reasons why I support the bid is that I see it as an opportunity for Ontario — I'm speaking as a Toronto member — to get some infrastructure that we badly need, that could take years and years or perhaps never be, in this city and across the province that will be of lasting benefit for Ontarians. That includes, which some of my colleagues talked about, affordable housing, which we badly need, and sports facilities for communities, which we badly need.

What I don't want to see is an event that makes a lot of money for a few and at the end of the day — I'm sure

none of us want this — the taxpayers, we, the citizens, are left holding the bag without a whole lot of benefits back to the community, that lasting legacy. That is absolutely critical. The finances of this and the community involvement are of absolute importance.

One thing I want to speak to briefly is the environment. When things are being built in a hurry and we have a deadline, the environment can suffer as a result. What I would like to see — in fact, it would be critical from my point of view — is that the bid should have a plan to construct the Olympic facilities and operate the games in a way that does the least possible harm, in my view there should be no harm, to the environment, and which uses cutting-edge environmental technology. This is critical because, particularly with the massive environmental deregulation we have seen over the past few years, when it comes to environmental protection it is really important that for this kind of massive undertaking we have that built right into the bill.

For instance, I'm concerned about the latest government proposal, and I'll be fighting it, which has something to do with what's called "inert fill." The government has proposed changes to that in allowing certain fill that used to be considered contaminated now to be considered not so contaminated. The idea is that now, if this passes, you can move contaminated soil from a site, say, in Toronto to an industrial site which may not be contaminated, but under these proposals that fill could be moved to a site which doesn't have any contamination. It could be moved there just because it's an industrial site.

Those are the kinds of things we have to look out for, that in the rush to get things built and in place, we don't ignore the environment and again, down the road, leave our children and our grandchildren with a terrible legacy of cleaning up the environment as the result of rushed and very bad planning.

I support this bill today. I, personally, and my party, the NDP, have bottom lines for this bid. I believe David Crombie has been doing a great job and I believe his goals are similar. We would all agree that David Crombie is very inclusive. He is working very hard to make sure all of the players, all of the citizens have a say in how our Olympic bid should look. Thank you very much.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Let me first say thank you to the member from Etobicoke and the commissioner of the Olympics for allowing me to speak to this bill.

They say it's only a dream until you write it down; then it's a goal. I suggest to you that with the legislation that is being presented today, it's a goal. It has been written down and it is the goal that we want to make sure happens in this province. The goal is not only the future of Toronto; it's also the future of the small rural and urban communities across this province if we indeed get the summer Olympics.

What better place than Ontario. What a great venue for these games. All of these communities will benefit not only from an economic standpoint but from renewable local pride, human resource development, partnerships and

sports and youth development. The naysayers will project all kinds of negative thoughts but, in the long run, who will benefit from these games coming to our province and to Toronto? The people who will benefit are Ontarians. The people who will benefit are those who participate in these games.

Look what happened in Atlanta when they sold in excess of 71% of their tickets: new highways, new sports facilities, a new city core, improved public transit, improved infrastructure, new and upgraded community recreation facilities. That will happen not only in Toronto but in many of the host communities across this province. There will be an infusion of millions of dollars into the Ontario economy through tourism and related employment, something to the tune of 90,000 person-years between 1998 and the year 2008. We will establish a network of volunteers which will outsize the volunteers who took part in the winter Olympics in Calgary.

The benefit to communities such as Peterborough, my own community, my riding in the heart of the beautiful Kawartha Lakes area, cannot just be counted in dollars; we have to look at the human aspect of this whole event as well.

Peterborough has made a proposal to the Olympic committee to have the Olympic youth camp in Peterborough. This is an international leadership opportunity for young persons from all over the world. In this community alone it will allow 500 to 600 teenagers to participate in the best of the Olympic values, ideals and spirit. Youth would be part of a 10-day event where they would participate in working groups, with challenges on such themes as environmental concerns, global issues, personal skills and sports.

With this type of showcase, a community such as Peterborough would experience worldwide exposure for future tourism and development. Certainly it would highlight the tranquil beauty of our area.

What of the other communities that have pledged their support for the games? Each community will be improved by its participation. The volunteer network that will be created will prepare all communities for future challenges. As I speak, the volunteer committee in Peterborough is having a meeting this morning.

As I said in the beginning, it's only a dream until you write it down; then it becomes a goal. Ontario's and Toronto's goal is to have the best Summer Olympic Games in the year 2008, and it will happen.

1100

The Acting Speaker: Mr Kells, you have two minutes.

Mr Kells: I rise to thank the honourable members on both sides of the House for their comments and for their support. It's very gratifying. I take it very seriously and I appreciate it.

Similarly, I take seriously the suggestions that things could possibly be better, or should be done better, than last time. I understand fully their concerns to protect the communities in Toronto and also to bring the communities outside of Toronto into the Olympic bid.

I know there are critics who claim that the disadvantaged in our society cannot and will not share either the celebrations or the lasting benefits that accrue from the games. My answer to this is that I am confident that it is within our power and ability to make this pursuit of world recognition an adventure that ultimately bestows benefits on all segments of the public profile. I really feel sincere and confident in that regard.

This bill, as you know, asks municipalities to pass motions in support on a volunteer basis. I will be contacting all the municipalities in Ontario as a result of this show of support today to indicate the all-party support and also to ask that they participate.

I've been around the province a bit already. I am willing to go anywhere and everywhere if requested by any member of the Legislature. Happily, I was down to Kingston early, and I feel confident that if we were to have the games tomorrow, Kingston could be ready almost overnight from a sailing point of view. I've been down to Oshawa, as the honourable member mentioned. I'll be going up to Wasaga Beach to look at a beach volleyball site. I've been in Halton Hills and I'll go to Haliburton.

By and large, I just want everybody to know that I do not make the final decisions, but our office will be eager to assess any site and offer suggestions.

GASOLINE PRICES

PRIX D'ESSENCE

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I move a resolution on the price of gasoline:

Whereas the gasoline pricing practices of large supplier/retailers continues to be a problem which threatens consumers with unreasonably high prices, and price increases timed to coincide with long weekends, and which undermines the important role played by independent gasoline retailers in Ontario; and

Whereas gasoline pricing is an issue of common interest to all Canadian consumers; and

Whereas ensuring fair competition in the marketplace is the responsibility of the federal government under the Competition Act; and

Whereas the federal report of the Liberal committee on gasoline pricing in Canada, the McTeague report, tabled in June, 1998, concluded that the current Canadian wholesale and retail gasoline market is not truly competitive and that competition has steadily lessened in recent years; and

Whereas the McTeague report recommended that the Competition Act be amended to provide better protection for consumers, and that the federal government immediately act to replace the criminal burden-of-proof model currently used in sections dealing with predatory pricing and price discrimination; and

Whereas the need for immediate action on the part of the federal government to restore competition to the gasoline marketplace has been expressed by Ontario consumers to the Consumer Watchdog Commission of MPPs, appointed in spring 1998 by the Honourable David H.

Tsubouchi, Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations; and

Whereas the federal Competition Bureau is of the opinion that no marketplace problems exist in the gasoline industry which violate the Competition Act as currently drafted and a private member's Bill C-235 sets out amendments to the Competition Act to address certain of these issues;

Be it resolved that this House and the government of Ontario should call upon the federal government to address this problem of national dimensions by amending the Competition Act to address pricing practices within the gasoline industry and appoint a special investigator to enforce the revised act to ensure that Canadian consumers benefit from competitive and transparent gasoline prices across this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Rollins: I rise today as this motion addresses some of the concerns we have as far as the independent gasoline dealers throughout Ontario and the problems we have as consumers watching prices fluctuate all over the marketplace are concerned.

Today as we speak, in my riding of Quinte and in the Belleville area, gas from the major oil companies is selling at 43.9 cents a litre on the street. The wholesale price for gasoline out of the Toronto depot, the rack price with taxes rolled in, is 43.9 cents. If this is not detrimental to the independent dealers of this province, where there is no margin, there is nothing to put in — the last load of gas that was purchased at our station was 45.7 cents or 45.8 cents a litre, yet the competition — the major oil companies — is selling gas on the street at 43.9 cents. This is how the major oil companies are starting to put the squeeze on independent dealers across this province.

In 1992, the average gas price in Toronto was 53.26 cents; in Ottawa, it was 57.38 cents. There was a large variation in that. Today we have the same thing. In Sarnia, the price of gas today is 55 cents or 54 cents; in Barrie, it's around 54 cents or 55 cents. One of the reasons the market has been able to get away with this is because there are very few independent dealers in the Sarnia market. In 1992, 22.5% of the market in Ontario was independent dealers. In 1997, that had dropped to 18.2%. Now, in 1998, it has dropped to 17.3%.

Statistics right across this province and across Canada show that when we see the independent dealers removed from the marketplace there is only one thing that happens: It takes maybe a month or a month and a half, but then you see the price steadily increase, and then the major players sit there quite contented to sell their product equally down the street.

The federal government has looked into the pricing practices for a long time as far as the street price is concerned, but the street price is not the problem. The problem is that major oil companies have been allowed to produce product and sell it out of the refineries at no cost. They put it out in the tanks. They sell it and they price it

after it goes into the consumer's tank. As long as they're allowed to do that, to put that price on the product after it's sold, then they're able to charge that dealer whatever they want. They can take the loss, and in that way the small independents are slowly pushed out of the marketplace.

I had the pleasure of being down in Charlottetown early this fall. That is one province that has priced gasoline.

Regardless of what the oil companies say, that they've been paying a lot higher price, I challenge anybody in this province who was able to buy gas all summer at 50.5 cents a litre across the province.

I know that Prince Edward Island is a very small place, but they took a stand and took the pressure and said: "OK, fine, we're going to have some control over the price. We've got to have some continuity, to be able to protect the individual and make sure that those people are not upset."

When we as a government started putting on a little bit of pressure, the main gasoline suppliers, who are Shell and Imperial and Sunoco and Petrocan, got together and spent \$3 million to try to advertise to the public and say: "You're getting a good deal on oil prices. Look at what the price was back in 1957, look at what it was in 1960 and look at what it is today."

Those people are only interested in one thing: removing the competition from the marketplace. As long as that competition is in the marketplace, we as consumers have the opportunity to push for a little bit cheaper product in a fair market. But when the major oil companies decide they want to take hold and run out the independents, the Imperial Oil manager and the Shell Oil manager will stand up and say: "Well, we don't control the price. We only have 250 or 300 dealers across Ontario and we only set the price in 25% of them."

It's very nice for them to say that, but the 25% of the places they set the price in deal with about 80% of the total market. They don't set the price in a small station in Belleville, they don't set the price in a small place like Carrying Place; they set the price in downtown Toronto, where they go through millions of litres a day. That's where they have the input and the practices pushing that out on to the cost of the consumer.

1110

When you look at the independent retail gasoline marketers together, you have to compare a little bit once in a while to the United States. In the United States, Shell has 7% of the whole market, Mobil has 7%, Amoco has 7%, but here in Canada Esso has 22%, Petrocan has 17% and Shell has 16%.

When they control that much of the market, who is going to be the loser? I can tell you, the consumers of the province of Ontario are going to be the losers when the major oil companies have no competition from the independents to put the opportunity for choice in the marketplace when we fill up with gasoline.

Mr Speaker, you said you aged yourself because you can remember buying gas at 30 cents a gallon. I can

remember selling it at 29 cents a gallon, so you and I must not be too far off.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I don't remember that.

Mr Rollins: Some of those younger people don't remember that. They don't even remember gallons. They know that small quantity called a litre.

When the Canadian petroleum industry and the institute pushed out their reports, they wanted to make sure they were proving to the public: "If we're fleecing you and giving you a bit of a price hosing at the pumps, it's not a bad thing. You're getting a good deal, because in Germany, in France and in Switzerland they're paying a lot more." Well, our consumers don't drive their cars in those places; they drive their cars here in Ontario.

I know that the McTeague report was an improvement and tried to have some input. The committee believed that predatory pricing does occur in the province of Ontario. The committee found that there was a coalition and that there were predatory pricing practices. Mr Manley decided he would accept that report and has said he would table it and appoint some people, but that report has been given absolutely no teeth. As far as the federal government is concerned, yes, it's nice to go out and allow the people to look at it.

What I would like to see happen with this resolution is to put some more pressure on the federal government to bring transparency to the pricing practices. When an oil company can stand and tell you that they have 113 pricing zones in the province of Ontario so that they can have good competition, is it fair that somebody in the Quinte area today is buying gas at 43 cents a litre to put in their tank and yet in other parts of Ontario people are paying 55 cents? I don't think that's a fair practice, not only in Ontario but anywhere in Canada. We're Canadians. We have a lot of our own product. We have to stand up and make sure that as consumers we're protected.

Also, the McTeague report and Mr Manley's report said the independents don't have a big voice. No, they don't have a big voice, because they're only small compared to the oil companies.

We had a tax bill brought in by this government not too long ago to try to bring in some fairness as far as the pricing of gasoline and the tax level was concerned. There again, the major oil companies aren't too enthused with it because they don't want to put the tax money they've collected from the consumers of Ontario into the bank account of the federal government, into the province of Ontario's treasury. They would like to use it for the 30 or 40 days for themselves. It may not be collecting a whole lot of interest, but it saves them writing out that big cheque for the tax man. For anybody else, when you buy something, it's paid for at that time.

Those are the kinds of things that we, as people who try to make the laws in this province, should push for to make sure that the consumers of Ontario are better protected by ensuring that we have the opportunity for independents, that we can have the opportunity to pull into any station

that we see fit to and not kowtow to the major oil companies and the major markets of this province.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): It's a pleasure for me this morning to speak to this resolution from the member for Quinte, as I have been over the last almost two years speaking to this government about our concern with gasoline pricing in the province of Ontario.

I want to point out just a couple of things in the few minutes I have. The resolution certainly encourages the federal government to make recommendations that there be revisions to the Competition Act. We would all be supportive of any revisions that can be made that will make the Competition Act more binding on the major oil companies to price gasoline.

But the member for Quinte spent a significant amount of time talking about the independents, and we too are concerned about where it leaves the independent gasoline retailer in this province. The member should know, the Competition Act aside, that pricing is under the control of the province. If the government were really serious about the peril of the independent dealer in the province of Ontario, they would be looking at predatory pricing, because that is under their jurisdiction.

It's interesting to note that again a lot of reference has been made to the McTeague report. I attended those hearings and made a presentation to the committee. I point out today that in the government's concern over gasoline pricing, to my knowledge at least, having checked with the federal member, no government member appeared before that committee. I would have encouraged that at the time and I think it would have been helpful if they had brought the concerns of the province to that committee and been supportive in that way.

Having said that, though, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, who is supposed to look after the consumers of this province, has appointed the commission, the gas-busters, as they're better known, but that's very limited in its scope and its ability to do much of anything. If the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations were serious about this issue, I would have hoped it was not left to private members' business, because as we know, it doesn't have the opportunity to get the full debate that a resolution brought by the government before the House would have had.

Another thing the government of the province of Ontario can look at, that it has under its control, is that we are the second-highest-taxed province in the Dominion of Canada when it comes to gasoline pricing. The government can show leadership, if they really have the consumer at heart, by looking at gasoline taxes in Ontario, particularly where they could be used to benefit northern Ontario.

I have on record from one of the Ministry of Finance people that not one red cent from gasoline taxes is specified to go towards highway construction, for example. In other words, it goes into the general fund, into the general account, and is used in a number of ways. The government, if they didn't want to reduce gasoline taxes, could certainly specify that a certain amount of gasoline

taxes would go into highway improvement in the province of Ontario.

The resolution that's before us today is similar to the McTeague report, and I suggest, although it may not say that specifically, that it supports that. As I said at the outset, I think we all support the fairest gasoline prices in the province that we could have.

But we've been at this now a year and a half. In fact, I quote from a Toronto Star report in August 1997, where "The Premier said if the federal government won't do so, Ontario will go it alone to get the answers, he vowed," as he was outraged after we had brought the gasoline pricing issue up in the House that day.

The Premier also said in another report, I believe in the Globe and Mail, "I think the federal government should show leadership, but I am certainly prepared to lead the way with the other provinces. And if we have to, at the end of the day, we will go it alone, but we will have more impact if we go together."

All I'm saying is, I encourage the province of Ontario to do what it can in its jurisdiction, and that we also press for any violation of the Consumer Protection Act to be looked at by the federal government.

1120

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Ça fait combien de débats ? Ça fait au moins deux ou trois débats auxquels je peux penser dans l'année passée, et on a encore un projet de loi qui vient ici le jeudi matin pour demander qu'on fasse quelque chose en ce qui concerne le prix du gaz dans la province.

Chez nous, dans le nord de la province, le prix du gaz est beaucoup plus élevé comparé avec le sud de la province. Vous savez que cela représente un problème.

Ce que je trouve intéressant, c'est qu'on a encore un membre du gouvernement conservateur qui vient ici aujourd'hui avec une résolution, puis il faut croire que ce membre est honorable et que, franchement, il essaie de faire quelque chose pour résoudre le problème. Mais il n'y a pas d'action. Ça fait pas mal longtemps que ce gouvernement est en place. Ça fait au-dessus de trois ans et demi, puis ils n'ont fait quasiment rien quand ça vient à trouver des solutions au prix du gaz.

Pourquoi ? C'est très simple. Le prix du gaz est réglementé par le gouvernement fédéral. Ce qu'on a besoin de faire, si on est très sérieux comme députés provinciaux, pour être capable de contrôler le prix du gaz, c'est convaincre notre gouvernement fédéral de prendre sa responsabilité et de trouver des solutions.

On sait ce que c'est, le problème. Le problème est bien simple: les compagnies de gaz se mettent ensemble puis ils disent : «Écoutez, nous, on veut faire plus de profits. On va jouer avec les prix. On va s'entendre pour être capables de tous élever les prix à un certain temps. On va jouer avec les conditions du marché et on va faire un plus gros profit quand ça vient à l'argent qu'on fait du gaz.»

Mais à la fin de la journée, c'est le gouvernement fédéral qui a besoin de prendre cette responsabilité, parce que ça tombe sous les responsabilités du gouvernement fédéral.

Là, comme politiciens provinciaux, il y a certains parmi nous qui disent, «On veut faire quelque chose.» Je veux dire encore que le membre conservateur qui amène cette motion est honorable. Il essaie de faire la bonne affaire. Mais le point que je veux faire est que c'est une responsabilité fédérale. Combien de libéraux de la province de l'Ontario sont élus au gouvernement fédéral ? Tout le gang bien proche, à l'exception d'un seul. Est-ce qu'on ne peut pas avoir dans ce gang-là un couple de libéraux qui vont voir M. Chrétien pour dire, «Écoutez, on veut avoir une réponse pour ce qui est un vrai problème dans le nord de l'Ontario, comme dans le sud, et on veut trouver des solutions. Monsieur Chrétien, on vous demande d'agir.» ?

Moi, je n'entends pas Réginald Bélair, mon député fédéral, parler de cette question. Je n'entends aucun député fédéral en parler. Les seuls que j'entends parler, ce sont les députés ici à l'Assemblée provinciale parce qu'ils essaient de trouver des solutions, puis on n'a pas les outils.

Le seul temps que quelque chose a été fait sur le prix du gaz ici dans la province, la seule action de la province, c'était sous le gouvernement de Bob Rae. Notre gouvernement en 1990 — vous le savez, monsieur le Président — avait dit après les élections qu'on était pour ôter les frais d'utilisation sur les plaques de nos automobiles.

On avait fait ça pour le monde du nord de l'Ontario parce qu'on a réalisé, comme députés du nord, que le prix du gaz était entre 10 et 12 cents de plus le litre comparé au sud de la province. Notre gouvernement a dit : «On ne peut pas réduire le prix du gaz. Ce n'est pas nous autres qui le faisons. On ne peut pas réglementer les compagnies de gaz, parce que c'est une responsabilité fédérale. Mais on a un choix. On peut essayer possiblement de réduire les taxes sur l'essence», comme l'autre député l'a mentionné, ou on pourrait faire ce qu'on a fait pour le monde du nord : ôter les frais d'utilisation sur les plaques. On a choisi de faire ça. Ça veut dire que pendant le temps de notre gouvernement, pendant cinq ans, si on demeure dans le nord de la province, on ne paie pas les frais d'utilisation pour ses plaques chaque année.

C'était le gouvernement de Mike Harris, quand ils ont été élus en 1995, qui ont remis en place ces frais d'utilisation. Loin de faire quelque chose de positif pour aider sur le prix du gaz, monsieur le député conservateur, c'était votre gouvernement qui a rechargé les frais d'utilisation sur les plaques.

Je comprends qui vous avez un problème, je comprends que vous voulez que quelque chose soit fait et j'ai deux suggestions pour vous : Un, allez parler à Mike Harris et à son cabinet et convainquez-les d'agir là où ils en sont capables comme province ; par exemple, comme nous l'avons fait, d'éliminer les cotisations pour les plaques. Ou, deuxièmement, essayez de convaincre Mike Harris — et nous dans le parti NPD, allons vous aider sur cette question — de se mettre ensemble pour aller voir M. Chrétien à Ottawa pour dire : «Vous avez une responsabilité. C'est un problème dans notre province, et

on exige que notre gouvernement fédéral fasse quelque chose pour réglementer les compagnies de gaz pour qu'elles s'arrêtent de nous escroquer sur le prix du gaz qu'on achète à la pompe.»

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): First of all, I want to thank Mr Rollins for bringing forward this resolution. He is a member I have a tremendous amount of respect for. He has an awful lot of experience and expertise in this particular area.

His resolution speaks to the issue we've heard about consistently around this province, not just since this government's been around but previous governments as well, an issue of gas pricing and how gas prices rise consistently before long weekends and fall afterwards. It's a consistent volatility price issue and we've heard it for a number of years.

We have also heard, and we are all aware in this Legislature, that competition in the marketplace is the responsibility of the federal government through the Competition Act. We have also heard in his resolution that it speaks to the McTeague report, which is by a Liberal committee that talked about gasoline pricing. It went around the provinces and heard from other people about gasoline prices. They stated quite unequivocally in their report that the retail gasoline market is not truly competitive and that competition has steadily lessened in recent years. We can all attest to that.

As a matter of fact, yesterday I spoke with an independent retail gas station owner in my riding who told me that he drove from Windsor to Hamilton the previous day, and in Windsor gas prices were about 55 or 56 cents all across the city. That's because there are no independents there. In Hamilton yesterday we were experiencing prices around 44 or 45 cents, so there's quite a difference in pricing across the province.

The McTeague report also recommended that the Competition Act be amended to provide better protection for consumers, and we fundamentally agree with that recommendation.

I might also say that when you talk about this issue, it's not, as I said, an issue that is unique to this term of government; it's an issue that's been ongoing for a number of years. It's also not unique to this province. As the member said, in Charlottetown at the consumer ministers' conference this issue was discussed. It's an issue that's of concern to many people, not just in our area but in Newfoundland and New Brunswick.

The member for Essex South talked about regulating prices. They've regulated prices in PEI. What it's done is that it's stabilized prices, but they're stabilized in a high area and there's no competition — none whatsoever.

He also talked about the fact that the resolution would have been better coming from the government, but I'll say to him that a resolution from the government needs unanimous consent, and he knows that. When the minister brought it forward last year, the Liberals would not give unanimous consent. So it's not fair to say that when he knows full well it was his party that voted against it.

The member for Cochrane South talked about federal jurisdiction, and they understand. I must say to their credit that the NDP understands that it is federal jurisdiction. It's their responsibility to look at gas prices.

I urge all members in this House to vote in favour of this resolution. One of the best things I think we can do is send a message to the consumers to shop the independents, go to the independent gas stations, support them. Send a message to the big guys that we want competition in the marketplace.

1130

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I'm delighted to rise today to support once again the motion standing in the name of my friend from Belleville. I've never known a Rollins who didn't know a lot about the oil business. He has brought forward a resolution that I think we've seen before, Doug. This is pretty well the one, I think, that we had a year and a half ago. It doesn't change the fact that it's an important resolution. I want to take a few moments this morning to talk a little bit about the concern that a number of other members have also identified.

I represent a large part of rural eastern Ontario. We have no TTC, we have no OC Transpo, we have no public transit of any kind — I should correct that. We have a public system, sort of, in the city of Pembroke, but it's under some review at the present time and it's been changed to a private operator, essentially, running the Pembroke city transit. But by and large, if you live in communities like Petawawa or Deep River or Renfrew, which are the towns in the county, there is no public transit, and certainly if you're one of the tens of thousands of people who live in places like Barry's Bay and Rolphton and La Passe and Beachburg and Griffith, there is no public transit.

There's not even a bus in many of those areas. So you depend on your half-ton truck and you depend on your car. That's absolute reality for the vast majority of the people I represent, and I'm not alone. Mr Danford represents an area, north Hastings, which is very similar, and I'm sure the member for Chatham-Kent knows what I speak for his rural constituency.

When we talk about gasoline, we're talking about a subject that touches on the vitals of the daily Canadian experience, whether you live in rural Ontario or in rural Saskatchewan or in rural New Brunswick. That's why this subject is so important for legislatures, whether it be Queen's Park or New Brunswick or wherever.

I share the concern that other members have. The member from Hamilton is right to tell us there is some consumer preference that can be applied by going to support your local mom-and-pop operator, if you can figure it out. It's not always easy to figure out who's where any more in this business.

I was speaking this morning to a former member of the Legislature, the former member from Muskoka, who's in the business now up in Muskoka, and I was asking him how things were going. He had some very interesting things to say about dealing with one of the big oil companies. I'm not surprised because I've heard it, and

we've heard it again this morning from Mr Rollins who's bringing forward this resolution.

Something else has changed, though, in the last little while and that's the consolidation that's occurring within the oil business. I brought yesterday's Wall Street Journal to make the point. It is 127 years ago, I think — it was in the early 1870s — that John D. Rockefeller created the famous Standard Oil cartel. Was it Standard Oil of New Jersey? It started out as that. The Wall Street Journal has a very interesting example of what became of those companies.

In the late 19th century, Rockefeller had something like 85% of the market for petroleum products in the United States, and governments at the state and particularly at the national level in the United States in the early days of this century said: "You're running a trust, you're running a cartel. We're going to break it up." The breakup was ordered I think in about 1910 or 1912. But isn't it interesting what's happening these days?

We heard this week that Exxon was going to be taking over Mobil. You'll be interested to know that they are both part of the old Rockefeller cartel. We heard again this week that the French multinational Total is buying out PetroFina. We heard just a few weeks ago that British Petroleum and Amoco, both again I think substantial products of the old Rockefeller cartel, are coming back together again. So what are seeing? We are all standing and saying, "God, let's support the mom-and-pop operator," and I agree, but is anybody noticing that John D. Rockefeller's cartel is coming back together again? If you think it was tough a year or two ago, or five or 10 years ago, what do you think it's going to be like if you're Doug Rollins out in Belleville or someone up in Cobden or Petawawa in my constituency when Exxon and Mobil get together? We are seeing a massive consolidation in this critical sector.

The Wall Street Journal tells me that this is good for consumers and, you know, if probably will be as long as crude oil prices are at their near-record lows. But I ask this Legislature and I ask the government, is anybody giving any thought to what this consolidation is going to mean over time, because it is now being reported that the other majors in the North American market, people like Atlantic Richfield and Chevron and a few of the others, can't sit still, that there's probably going to be even more consolidation.

So where does the average consumer and, more important, where does the small retailer stand in that scheme of things? It's not just in petroleum products.

One of the things that really concerns me about this current pork crisis is the situation where we're seeing pork prices at the farm gate dropping by 70% in the last 10 weeks, a 70% drop in the farm gate price in 10 or 12 weeks, and hardly a move on the retail price. What are we seeing at the retail end? Well, you've read it all in the last couple of weeks: Loblaw's is buying Provigo; Sobey's and IGA are getting together. In central Canada the retail business in food is going to be very substantially consolidated, and what is that going to mean to a pork producer or any

kind of a food producer in Renfrew or in Kent or in Oxford or in Perth or in Glengarry?

You've got to think that there's something wrong with this marketplace. I thought competition was something to be applauded, and I want to applaud, but as one of the representatives of the OFA said to us yesterday morning in our briefing, it seems that the primary instinct of competition these days is to eliminate competition. Whether it's in gasoline or petroleum products or whether it's in the retailing of food, I think this Legislature representing the broad community had better start to think about what kind of strategies we can reasonably develop and reasonably employ to give the average consumer of petroleum products or the regular consumer of food, and we're talking about critical staples that affect the daily lives of everyone, what we are going to do to bring some reasonable pressure to bear on conglomerates and cartels that are combining to develop market shares that in the areas of gasoline and petroleum products we haven't seen since the last days of the famous John D. Rockefeller.

That's why I want to support my good friend from Belleville for bringing this issue to the House, and I support the resolution again for those and other reasons.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It's interesting around here today. I've had a number of people ask me why I'm wearing the green tie that I have on. Some will remember —

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): He's Irish.

Mr Martin: No, it's the tie that we in this caucus wore almost a year ago today to object to the passing of Bill 160, the attack by this government on teachers, on trustees, on the school system.

Mr Wettlaufer: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the explanation given by Mr Martin, the member for Sault Ste Marie, means that his tie is a prop and it should then be removed.

The Acting Speaker: I won't go that far. You have the choice of colours that you can get today for ties. Look at mine.

The member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: Thank you very much, Speaker, which brings me to my point, which is that this government seems to have no difficulty, no sense of right or wrong when it comes to attacking public servants, teachers, the poor, the labour movement —

Mr Wettlaufer: We're talking about gasoline here.

Mr Martin: I'm getting to it — to move their agenda forward. But when it comes to their own friends, when it comes to the big business interests of this province, when it comes to those people who peddle gasoline in this province, there seems to be an interesting and obvious lack of intestinal fortitude, backbone.

I find it passing strange that this member should again, in front of an issue that is very concerning to all the constituents of all our ridings, be bringing forward a private member's resolution. Why doesn't your government take this bull by the horns and bring —

Mrs Ross: We did.

Mr Martin: You didn't. You didn't do a darn thing. There's nothing on the books, on the table, in this jurisdiction about gasoline prices from this government, not one thing. All you've done is point fingers at the federal government. All you've done is pass the blame. All you've done is continue that thing that you're doing these days, that mantra that you're doing these days: "We're not the government. We're here to fix the government."

Well, you are the government. Wake up. You were elected on June 8, 1995. We all know it only too well. You are the government. Have some intestinal fortitude. Have some backbone. Take on the big guys. Never mind the little guys in the playground. You're the bullies. You guys are showing yourselves to have the big muscles, ready to go out there and fight the labour movement and civil servants and trustees. How about the gasoline industry? What about the petroleum industry? Where is your commitment? What is that power? Where is that drive that the Premier has raised in North Bay and across this province?

1140

"We're going to take the gasoline prices on and we're going to bring them to their knees. We're going to tell them that it's not proper that on long weekends they should raise the prices before the long weekend starts, and then lower them again after the long weekend's over. We're going to take the petroleum industry to task," says the big, bad Harris Conservative government in Ontario. "We've shown them that we can take on the poor, we can take on the labour movement, we can take on the civil service, we can take on the very government of this province. But we can't take on the petroleum industry," because you've done absolutely nothing.

A whole lot of bombast and air and big talk and gas-buster commissions and people out there on long weekends, saying, "We're going to fight the good fight for our constituents," yet, at the end of the day, what do we have? Another private member's resolution; not even a bill that would tie your government to something that we could call your government on, to say: "Bring it forward, bring it on, table it, we'll discuss it. We'll pass it with all due haste in this place so that we can all together send a message to the petroleum industry," and in fact to all those other industries, which, as the member for Renfrew rightly suggested a few minutes ago, are coming together now to make ever-increasing profits on the backs of all of us.

But no, you won't do that. When it comes to actually fighting with somebody who has some power and strength, you back down. It's so typical of the bullies, so typical of that bully image that you've rightfully gained for yourself over the last three years. You'll take on the little guys, you'll take on the poor, you'll take on the single mothers, you'll take on the children on welfare, you'll take on the union movement, which has been the only institution that has done anything in this province to increase and improve the quality of life for the middle class over a long number of years, you'll take on the government that works on behalf of all of us to deliver programs, to make sure that everybody across the province receives equitable and

equal service and access to education and health care, but you won't take on the gasoline industry.

It's interesting. In this place, every time this issue comes up — and it has been brought up on a number of occasions. I brought it up myself. As a matter of fact, I was the one who introduced the motion to have unanimous agreement to bring Ontario's voice to the gathering of ministers of consumer and commercial relations from across the country to say: "Let's deal with the gasoline industry. Let's tell them that they can't do this any more."

What did we get? We got a battle going on between the Ontario Tory government, which doesn't think it's the government any more, and the Liberals on this side of the House who want to protect their federal cousins because they know they have some responsibility too. Who loses in that? The consumer loses. Every time he loses.

I understand why the member across the way is bringing this resolution forward. If he's frustrated in his part of the province about this fluctuation up and down and the seeming lack of competition out there in the petroleum industry, particularly when it comes to the pumps and filling up your gas tank, I am as frustrated as he is. I wish we could do something. I know that you can. You're part of the government. You could bring this to your cabinet colleagues. They've done it in PEI. Prince Edward Island, the smallest province in the union, had the intestinal fortitude to say to the gasoline companies —

Mrs Ross: They have the highest prices across the country as well.

Mr Martin: It doesn't matter whether it's high or low. The point I'm making here is that they had the intestinal fortitude to meet with the gasoline industry and say, "Unless you do this, we're going to bring in regulation," and they did. The province has the power to bring in regulation to take care of this.

I know there is a bigger issue here that was referred to by the member from Renfrew, which is the issue of competition and the Competition Act. We know that's in the federal domain and that the federal government needs to move on that very quickly. When you look around at the banking industry coming together now and the petroleum industry coming together now, we really do need to take a look at the Competition Act so that in fact there is existing in Ontario and in Canada today a market system that is free, that allows for some competition, that allows for some entrepreneur to come forward and pick up on an idea or take a gift he has or something he's designed and put it into the marketplace and sell it and get fair return for the effort he's made.

But we know that more and more, as we allow the powers that be in the world today, the global economy, to take over Ontario and Canada, less and less of the marketplace is free, that fewer and fewer of our friends and neighbours and family members who want to get into business can really get into business with any expectation that they'll make a few bucks over time, because the sale of commodities is controlled by financial interests who are not actually interested in the selling of commodities; they're more interested in making money on selling the

right to sell commodities. I think that's what you'll find when you get into the whole question of gasoline prices.

As I said today, I find it passing strange to be standing here once again in this place entertaining a resolution by a private member at private members' hour when he's part of a government that could do something. Not only that, I find it passing strange that he's bringing a resolution forward, not a bill. If he brought forth at least a bill, the House leader for the Liberals and the House leader for the New Democrats would be more than happy to bring it forward, debate it for second reading, bring it out for some discussion and bring it back here and pass it for third reading and do something.

This smoke and mirrors, this standing up in great splendour and making statements about how you're going to fight for the constituent and the little guy and the consumer, about how we're going to take on the petroleum industry, but then at the end of the day, nothing — it isn't going to sell. People in Ontario today are not that stupid. They're a bright bunch out there. They know, they can see through this, and they will see through this resolution here this morning.

I know that the member from Renfrew said he was going to support this. I have to tell you, I'm not sure whether I'll be supporting it or not, given the circumstances within which it has been presented, but I'll tell you, I'm listening this morning.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm very pleased to join the debate with respect to this resolution, which essentially is dealing with fair gas prices and also dealing with the unreasonable removal of competition with respect to independent gas dealers. The bottom line is that this very same resolution was introduced in August 1997 by Minister Tsubouchi. He tabled a resolution which required unanimous consent to send a message to the federal government, which is responsible for gas pricing in this country. There wasn't unanimous consent, because the Liberal Party didn't give it in this House, so we couldn't send a clear message in August 1997 because the twins — the provincial Liberals and the federal government — didn't want to do anything about this.

The facts of this matter are very simple. The federal government is responsible for gasoline prices in this country. A report was put out by the private member, Dan McTeague, Report of the Liberal Committee on Gasoline Pricing in Canada, in June of this year. That was followed up by a response by the Minister of Industry, John Manley, to Dan McTeague, responding to the recommendations in the report and dealing with it. Clearly, the federal government is responsible for it. They're trying to deal with it at this point in time.

In response to that, as part of the watchdog commission, we put out a fair price policy at the retail gas pump. Quite frankly, we're doing all we can, from a provincial jurisdiction, to try to make sure that the federal government lives up to its obligations. We're not going to take the road of PEI, which has the highest gas prices in this country, and basically inflict meaningless price regulation where it's just going to harm the consumer.

We're not about harming the consumer; we're about making sure that the consumers are protected. We know the federal government doesn't care how those consumers are protected.

This week, I sent a letter to the Honourable John Manley asking him to deal with this problem, because we have very specific problems we have to deal with. I basically started the letter off by saying: "I am pleased that the federal government has agreed that a detailed research of gasoline retail pricing is appropriate, and in particular that a steering committee will be drafting terms of reference for the study within the next month." The federal government, through the Minister of Industry, has acknowledged that they're responsible for gasoline pricing.

1150

I went on further and I said to Mr Manley: "In my riding of Simcoe Centre, which geographically encompasses Bradford-West Gwillimbury, town of Innisfil and the city of Barrie, gasoline pricing practices of large suppliers/retailers continue to be a problem which threaten consumers with unreasonably high prices, price increases timed to coincide with long weekends" — we all know we get gouged every long weekend and the federal government does nothing — "and in particular, predatory pricing practices related to high-traffic volume that result in my constituents paying gas prices substantially more than in other parts of southern Ontario."

The bottom line is that when the McTeague report came out from the federal government, they were basically looking at southern Ontario, acknowledging that gas prices in northern Ontario were far too high. What I said to Mr Manley is that in my particular area of Simcoe Centre, in the city of Barrie, we're paying higher gas prices than any other place in southern Ontario, and the prices are astounding in terms of what they range. As of the week of November 16, we were paying 55.7 cents per litre, whereas in Toronto they're paying 49.5; in Tillsonburg, in southwestern Ontario, they're paying 48.3; and even north of Barrie, they were paying more than 55.7 cents per litre.

I said to the minister: "I further understand that the Canadian Petroleum Products Institute is of the opinion that gas pricing practices are simply a case of supply and demand, with retailers charging prices to keep up with their competitors. In addition, industry representatives say that weekend and holiday price jumps are coincidental, not planned and not related to high traffic periods." I basically said to the minister, "That is a bunch of bunk, and you know that."

The bottom line is that we have tremendous commuter traffic from the city of Barrie down to Toronto and we have tremendous traffic from Toronto and the southern areas coming up to Barrie, because that's one of the areas where they have to stop and gas up their cars to keep on going up north. We have tremendous high traffic volume. The bottom line is, we're getting gouged in our area because we have high traffic volume.

It has nothing to do with supply and demand, because we know the oil industry has a glut and they may be

bringing down the price of crude to \$10 a barrel, but also we know they can make the most money because of the high traffic volume. It has nothing to do with supply and demand. It's highly offensive when you go through Orangeville and they're paying seven cents per litre less than the city of Barrie, and throughout southern Ontario. We know that basically what they're trying to do has nothing to do with supply and demand; it has to do with making the best dollar they can. I'm not against anyone making the best dollar they can, but don't come out and say they're dealing with supply and demand, because all they're trying to do is gouge the consumers up in my riding of Simcoe Centre.

Returning to the point and to the facts, the member for Sault Ste Marie doesn't have the facts. He knows that the federal government is responsible for gas prices in this country.

The provincial Liberals have the gall to sit there and say, "John D. Rockefeller is going to deal with this and there's a consolidation of the industry." The bottom line is that the minister of the federal government, John Manley, recognizes that they've got a problem. What we're asking them to do is address this problem immediately, because consumers are getting gouged. One of the figures I've looked at for my own riding, for people who have to travel all the time, is that they're looking at paying an extra \$200 per year per car in terms of dealing with these high gas prices, so I support the resolution.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The jurisdiction is provincial. I wish the member would bring in a bill which would prevent predatory pricing practices. That happens in many provinces. It happens in over 30 states in the United States.

If the member for Simcoe Centre is very concerned, he should write his letter to the Premier. He's as large as life bullying other people around, but when it comes to dealing with the oil barons, the people who set the gas prices in Ontario, he's a pussycat. He does nothing about it. He talks a lot. He makes some noise. He huffs and he puffs and then he does nothing about it. The honest minister, Mr Saunderson, made a statement in this House that said the provincial government had no interest in getting involved in it, and he was being honest about it. The rest of you play this little game. He's the honest guy sitting in this House.

Bill Davis brought in a bill which froze gasoline prices in 1975. It's within provincial jurisdiction. If you're that concerned about it, I say you have provincial ministers who can take the action: the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Minister of Energy, and of course the person who runs the government, the Premier of this province.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to join the debate on the private member's resolution standing in the name of Doug Rollins, the member for Quinte.

All Ontarians have experienced the rise and fall of gas prices. They've experienced the fluctuation of gas prices, they've experienced the volatility of gas prices and they

know, as we know, that this usually seems to take place just prior to a long weekend or in another period that is generally associated with increased travel volume. Ontarians perceive that major oil companies are taking advantage of their dominant position in the Canadian marketplace and are free to raise prices without fear of penalty or retribution.

Many of my constituents in Scarborough have asked why these events have taken place, and I know members across the province have had the same questions from their constituents. In fact, we've had hundreds of calls to a gas busters' telephone hotline, which was set up by the Consumer Watchdog Commission on September 2, 1998. Ontario consumers have used the hotline to express their anger and frustration at what they see as a flagrant disregard for fair pricing policy on the part of oil companies.

If true, these actions would clearly indicate that consumers are being targeted by gas companies. These consumers are the hard-working taxpaying people of Ontario who have called this hotline. They've used expressions, such as "price fixing," "price gouging" and "collusion" in describing the actions of oil companies and their retailers.

Through the efforts of the Honourable David Tsubouchi, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations and the Consumer Watchdog Commission, we've been successful in forcing the federal government to recognize the problem and the need to find solutions.

These are important first steps, but in order to continue the process of returning fairness to retail gas pricing, we must first examine the method used by oil companies to establish the price of gasoline.

According to the Petroleum Communication Foundation, some of the major factors that contribute to the fluctuation of gas prices consist of competition, refining and marketing costs and the retail portion of crude oil costs. They claim that gas prices are driven by market forces and not necessarily by costs. Different competitive conditions and marketing strategies, along with upgrades and modernization to meet present and future environmental standards, and the distance that gasoline has to be transported to market also affect the cost. Marketing costs can also vary from region to region. Finally, there is the cost of crude oil which is priced on the international market.

The industry has also suggested that the reason for the volatility or fluctuation is a simple case of supply and demand, with the retailers changing their prices to keep up with their competitors. However, three major players dominate the Canadian petroleum industry: Imperial Oil, Petro-Canada and Shell. Together, these companies wield considerable influence on both the wholesale and retail markets and have a dual distribution position. This means they are both suppliers and competitors for their own dealers as well as for independents.

The industry has also stated that the overall average price per litre has dropped over the last decade. The Canadian Petroleum Products Institute released a study on gasoline prices. The main objectives of the study were to

assess consumers' perceptions and attitudes relating to the topics of concern about gasoline prices. The CPPI goes on to state that in current dollars, inclusive of taxes, gasoline prices have increased in Canada. However, exclusive of taxes, prices have declined by four cents per litre since 1986, and this has led to savings of some \$3.5 billion.

The CPPI believes that 32 price wars in the Toronto area last year were based on a healthy and competitive market but the Independent Retail Gasoline Marketers Association of Canada disagrees. They state that in Canada the wholesale and retail markets, dominated by the three national players — Esso, Petro-Canada and Shell — and a few regional refiners — Husky, Sunoco and Ultramar — directly account for 70% of the retail volume and 80% of the wholesale volume. In essence, the market is an oligopoly, the majors being the price-setters.

Even though the prices may have dropped over the last decade, it does not account for the vast fluctuations in price that traditionally appear before and during peak periods, such as long weekends and holidays.

I urge the federal government to take action on the issue of gasoline pricing, and I ask the Liberal members and the NDP members here today to send a strong message to the federal government by voting in favour of this resolution.

As my colleague from Quinte has stated, we are not trying to dictate what the price should be, we're only trying to ensure that the pricing policies of the gas companies are fair and just and do not victimize the consumers of this province. I want to commend my colleague for —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Time has expired. Mr Rollins, you have two minutes.

Mr Rollins: I'd like to thank all the members in the House today who have spoken in support of the resolution I have brought in. I'd also like to bring to the attention of the members of the House that we have Randy Turner here. He's not a constituent of mine but he lives in Northumberland, not far from the boundaries of my riding. He is one of the members who has worked on the Dan McTeague committee that the federal government has set up, yet they don't have the feeling that they have a real listening ear as far as the federal government is concerned.

I'd like to also remind the member for Sault Ste Marie that since he moved out of the backbench, he has lost track of the person who spoke ahead of him. If he had been in the House and listened to the man who spoke ahead of him — he was quite in support of the NDP telling the federal government that it's their responsibility. I don't know whether the colour of the tie upset the member for Sault Ste Marie or what happened, but something went wrong.

I also want to remind the members of the Liberal Party that, yes, we had a resolution brought in by Minister Tsubouchi last year, and those people in the Liberal Party chose to talk the clock out so we didn't have the opportunity to vote on it. That tells us where some of those people — it wasn't all the members of the Liberal Party who spoke here.

I want to thank you very much for listening and giving us support. We all have to keep in mind that if we continually push the independent oil companies and businesses out of our consumer market, you and I that down the road are going to pay an extremely high price. I know the province of PEI set a price, but I can also say it wasn't the highest price in Canada last summer. I thank everybody for supporting it.

The Acting Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

CITY OF TORONTO XXIX
SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES BID
ENDORSEMENT ACT, 1998
LOI DE 1998 APPUYANT
LA CANDIDATURE
DE LA CITÉ DE TORONTO
CONCERNANT LES XXIX^e
JEUX OLYMPIQUES D'ÉTÉ

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will deal first with ballot item number 35, standing in the name of Mr Kells.

Mr Kells has moved second reading of Bill 77. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Kells: I ask that the bill be ordered for third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

GASOLINE PRICES
PRIX D'ESSENCE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with ballot item number 36, standing in the name of Mr Rollins.

Mr Rollins has moved private member's notice of motion number 33. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

We have debated everything that had to be debated. I will now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1331.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): The government has embarked on a disastrous policy of forcing a number of our local schools to close by imposing a nefarious funding formula.

Quality education for our children cannot be based on 100 square feet per student. Quality education must take into account class size, teacher training, special programs, parental input and community relations with the local school.

The Minister of Education and Training has not taken into account the essential nature of local schools and their symbiotic relationship with the surrounding community. For instance, the province does not support nursery schools, daycares or parenting centres in our schools, yet these are an essential part of our communities.

The province does not care whether children go to school in their neighbourhood. Most parents believe children should walk to school. It makes neighbourhoods safer and helps prevent excessive traffic.

The province thinks middle schools, music rooms, libraries, gyms and space for English as a second language are frills, yet these are essential programs.

If the minister cannot recognize that inner-city schools have special needs and are an irreplaceable part of community life, he should step down and have someone else with a much clearer vision of quality education take over.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Neighbourhood schools, community-based schools are in danger of being shut down across this province, in Niagara region as well.

I want to tell you that I'm proud to stand firmly with the supporters of Monsignor Clancy High School in Thorold. The school council, led very capably by its chair, Dennis Landry, along with parents and students and former students of Monsignor Clancy, appealed to Thorold city council earlier this week, calling on them to support these families in opposition to the anticipated and feared closure of Monsignor Clancy.

Monsignor Clancy is the only Catholic high school in Thorold. If Monsignor Clancy isn't kept open, those Catholic students will have to be bussed outside of their community. It's not good for the students, it's not good for their families and it's not good for the community of Thorold.

Yet another high school, Merritton High School in the community of Merritton, once again is very much at risk, real risk of imminent closure.

This government should be intervening to make sure these schools stay open, to make sure that the communities they serve are indeed well served by them. Rather, this government, with its policies of abandonment of public education, publicly funded education, is facilitating the closure of schools like Monsignor Clancy and Merritton and similar community-based neighbourhood schools across this province at both the elementary and secondary levels.

This government has stolen \$1 billion out of public funding for education. The impact is being seen and heard and felt loudly and clearly by folks down in Niagara.

JESSE'S JOURNEY

Mr Bob Wood (London South): It is with pleasure that I provide the House with an update on Jesse's Journey — A Father's Tribute, which is Londoner John Davidson's walk across Canada in support of genetic research. Following on the heels of the successful 1995 Jesse's Journey, when John Davidson pushed his wheelchair-

bound son, Jesse, across Ontario to raise more than \$1 million for research, this year John is walking alone. He began his 8,300-kilometre walk in St John's, Newfoundland, on April 10 and is currently approaching Calgary, Alberta.

John has traversed more than 7,000 kilometres across nine provinces and is looking forward to the culmination of the journey in Victoria, BC, on January 20. John's goal is to raise \$10 million to establish an endowment fund which will continue to direct \$1 million each year towards research to eventually find cures for muscular dystrophy, ALS, cystic fibrosis, breast cancer and many other genetic diseases. To date, John has generated more \$1.6 million through the generosity of grassroots supporters across Canada.

John is walking across Canada to educate the public about his work and vision to fund genetic research. I invite each and every member to consider supporting this very courageous and special Ontario resident and his worthwhile endeavour to make a difference in the lives of thousands of Canadian families suffering the ordeal of genetic disease.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have stood here many times in the past and told the members of the Legislature how northwestern Ontario does not receive health care funding and support equal to the rest of the province. Today I need to tell you of another crucial service that the people of northwestern Ontario will be losing unless the Minister of Health acts quickly to correct it.

On April 1 of next year, the Ministry of Health is delisting from its OHIP formulary publicly funded rehabilitation services across the province, leaving the only access to publicly funded physiotherapy services in northwestern Ontario to hospital-based and community care access centre services.

The problem is that hospital-based physiotherapy services right now are only providing 15% of patients' needs, and even with that small percentage, the waiting lists are extensive and only priority-needs clients can access care within reasonable time frames.

The minister has acknowledged this province elsewhere in the province by allocating \$39 million to provide these needed services through schedule 5 clinics. However, there are no schedule 5 clinics in northwestern Ontario — I repeat, none — and, as a result, this April 1 delisting will leave 85% of the people needing physiotherapy services forced to pay out of pocket or through private insurance plans for services that people in the rest of the province receive under OHIP.

This is nothing more than two-tiered health care, and it is shameful that this situation should be facing all of us in northwestern Ontario. Minister, you can't leave us hanging out to dry here. We deserve the same level of service as everyone else in the province. Fix this problem, Minister, and fix it now.

PROTECTION OF WATER RESOURCES

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I rise to inform the House that today I introduced a resolution calling on the government to take action to prevent the sale or diversion of Great Lakes waters to foreign countries, commercial enterprises and individuals.

This resolution is similar to one passed unanimously in the United States House of Representatives in October. That US resolution was introduced by Representative Bart Stupak of Michigan in response to the Harris government's granting of a permit to Nova Group of Sault Ste Marie to sell three billion litres of Lake Superior water over a five-year period to an Asian company.

We cannot allow Great Lakes waters, our most precious natural resource, to become a tradable commodity under the free trade agreement. We must act now to keep the floodgates from opening. I am calling for a more comprehensive and detailed regulatory policy designed to protect Ontario's water. That's especially needed in light of the threat to water from the Canada-US free trade agreement and the North American free trade agreement. The failure to pass laws to protect Ontario's waters has opened the possibility of unfettered commercial exploitation.

The federal Liberal government has promised a plan to ban water exports, but months have passed and still we've seen nothing. I hope my resolution will provide some strong encouragement to act.

EDUCATION IN DURHAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my pleasure to rise today to inform the members of the House of the good things that are happening in education in Durham.

At a special meeting held on November 30, the Durham Catholic District School Board and chair Jim McCafferty approved their 1998-99 budget of \$166,157,321. It's a budget filled with good news for students, parents and, most important, taxpayers.

The average class size in secondary schools has been reduced from 27 to 22 — down. At the elementary level, the average class size has also been reduced to under 25, as outlined in Bill 160. As well, almost \$4 million is being spent on technology in the classroom.

Clearly, the student-focused funding model is working for my citizens and my constituents in Durham, along with the member from Oshawa.

Jim McCafferty, chair of the Durham Catholic board, had this to say about the approved budget: "I am quite pleased with the improvements we have been able to fund including reductions in class size...increased services in special education and significant steps in providing more student accommodation." I'd like to commend director Grant Andrews and the staff of the Durham Catholic board for their hard work in preparing the 1998 budget.

I believe that with every board that's responsible for the student-focused funding model, listening to the input of their ratepayers, the students, we have a better system in

Ontario thanks to our Minister of Education, Dave Johnson.

1340

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): Today is International Day of Disabled Persons. It is a sad day for the 1.5 million Ontario citizens with disabilities who were betrayed by this government's introduction of a sham Ontarians with Disabilities Act last week. People with disabilities were appalled that the government would attempt to claim that it has fulfilled its promise to them with a bill that could have been written on the back of a paper napkin. Legislation is not even needed to bring about the minor changes they are offering.

There is only one way for the government to redeem itself. It must withdraw Bill 83 and recommit to a genuine, full and open consultation that will produce a bill with substance and teeth. Persons with disabilities need to have the barriers they face in every facet of daily life addressed by forward-thinking and progressive measures. Often the accommodations that need to be made are small but not obvious and would make a tremendous difference, while the cost of not including vital and talented people in the economic life of this province hurts everyone.

The government must assume a leadership role and provide effective incentives for positive change throughout all sectors of society. People are willing to change, but need to know how. Meet with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee now to set up a process to put this initiative on the right track. Withdraw this sham legislation now and do it right.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I rise again to bring to the attention of the government members the kind of devastation that's happening in communities like mine in Hamilton as a result of your agenda. On the front page of the Hamilton Spectator today is an article entitled "Lower City Trailing in Grade 3." When we look further at the story, the next headline is "Don't Point Finger at Teachers: Experts say poverty a significant factor in lower city's poorer grade 3 test scores."

It goes on to quote Gina Brown, who's a McMaster University nursing professor:

"There is more that determines health and competence than health care and education.

"Everything we know shows that there is a higher concentration of problems in children — be they emotional, learning, social or conduct problems — in poorer areas."

Jackie Gordon of the Hamilton-Wentworth Social Planning Council says that poverty is one of the major risk factors affecting children's ability to learn:

"It is hard to learn math when you are hungry.

"It's tough to decipher English grammar when your clothes are thin and you're cold."

What has the agenda of this government been? You've cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 22%. You've downloaded public housing and public health. You've cut education funding and health funding, and the growing gap shows us that the middle class and poor are going further and further down while your rich corporate friends go up and up with your 30% tax scam.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for permission for male members of the Legislature to wear the white ribbon today indicative of the support of the White Ribbon Campaign.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder —

The Speaker: I have a statement left. Do you think I can do the statement?

Ms Churley: I'm sorry. I didn't know there was another one.

NIAGARA GATEWAY WELCOME CENTRE

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): It's my pleasure today to announce that after seven years of planning and dreaming, the Niagara Gateway Welcome Centre in Grimsby is officially a go. Construction will begin next year at the site, located at Casablanca Avenue, the South Service Road and the Queen Elizabeth.

The project is unique in that it demonstrates a capacity for partnership between the province and local governments for a project that will be developed and operated by the private sector. The centre will be designed to be self-sustaining and at no cost to the taxpayers. The town of Grimsby and the province came to terms on the sale of land earlier this year. Since then, a developer has been chosen and construction will begin early in the new year. The region of Niagara, the Niagara Economic and Tourism Corp, the Wine Council of Ontario and the Grimsby Chamber of Commerce were all key partners in this operation.

Grimsby, on the Queen E, is the northwestern gate to the Niagara region, home of Niagara Falls, the Shaw Festival, Casino Niagara and the grape-growing and wine-making country of record. Some 14 million tourists visit every year. The new welcome centre includes restaurants, food, visitor information, traveller service, retail stores, fruit vendors, community artisans, picnic areas and office meeting space.

My congratulations to the town of Grimsby for its diligence and hard work in making a dream a reality.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker — I actually have two points of order. The first point of order is that I'm asking for unanimous consent for us to be able to wear the December 6 memorial button.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Unanimous consent to wear the December 6 — it's the school massacre. Agreed? Agreed.

Your second point of order?

Ms Churley: My second point of order is — I don't know if it's a mistake on today's order paper or what, but traditionally in this House all three parties have made statements in memorial to the 14 women who died, and —

The Speaker: I don't need the history. If you're looking for unanimous consent, could you just —

Ms Churley: I'm asking for unanimous consent outside of ministerial statements.

The Speaker: So you're asking for unanimous consent for a statement outside the ministerial statements. Agreed? No.

Ms Churley: He's saying no?

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Standing order 62(a) provides that standing committees on estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 59 and 61 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.

The House not having received a report from the standing committee on estimates for certain ministries on Thursday, November 19, 1998, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 62(b), the supplementary estimates before the committee on the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Health, the Management Board Secretariat, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ministry of Transportation are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported here and received by the House according to the clam chowder act.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Mr Kennedy from the standing committee on estimates presented the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60(a), the following estimates (1998-99) are reported back to the House as they were not previously selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be received and concurred in:

Office of the Assembly

Vote 201, Office of the assembly, \$94,259,100 —

The Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE CONSUMER
PROTECTION ACT, 1998LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES CONSOMMATEURS
EN MATIÈRE
D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Mr Sampson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 90, An Act to increase fairness and consumer protection while maintaining a balanced and stable automobile insurance plan in Ontario / Projet de loi 90, Loi visant à accroître l'équité et la protection des consommateurs tout en maintenant un régime d'assurance-automobile équilibré et stable en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): As the government's lead on auto insurance, I am today introducing the Automobile Insurance Consumer Protection Act.

The intent of this bill is to support initiatives resulting from our promised review of the automobile insurance system every two years. It recognizes the special needs of children and ensures a level playing field for all those in the insurance business.

Subject to the approval of the Legislature, injured accident victims, especially children, will receive the treatment they need, and all Ontario consumers will continue to benefit from a competitive and stable auto insurance market.

1350

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(PARAMEDICS), 1998LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(AUXILIAIRES MÉDICAUX)

Mr Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting Paramedics / Projet de loi 91, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui a trait aux auxiliaires médicaux.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to allow paramedics to use lamps that produce intermittent flashes of green light on their own vehicles when proceeding to an emergency.

EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS PROTECTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA PROTECTION DES TRAVAILLEURS AUXILIAIRES EN SITUATION D'URGENCE

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 92, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Flaherty.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I will wait for ministers' statements, Speaker.

FRANCHISE DISCLOSURE ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA DIVULGATION RELATIVE AUX FRANCHISES

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 93, An Act to require fair dealing between parties to franchise agreements, to ensure that franchisees have the right to associate and to impose disclosure obligations on franchisors / Projet de loi 93, Loi obligeant les parties aux contrats de franchisage à agir équitablement, garantissant le droit d'association aux franchisés et imposant des obligations en matière de divulgation aux franchiseurs.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Just briefly, I'd like to thank the members of the franchise sector working team. Representing the franchisors was Richard Cunningham from the Canadian Franchise Association; Sam Hamam from One Hour Moto Photo; Nick Javor —

The Speaker: Is this part of the bill?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: No. This is just a —

The Speaker: Introduction of bills.

THISTLETOWN CENTRE FOUNDATION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA FONDATION DU CENTRE THISTLETOWN

Mr Hastings moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 94, An Act to maintain the Thistle town Centre Foundation / Projet de loi 94, Loi visant à maintenir la Fondation du centre Thistle town.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): The bill continues the Thistle town Regional Centre as a crown agency and a corporation without share capital under the name, in English, of the Thistle town Centre Foundation; in French, Fondation du centre Thistle town.

The objects of the foundation are mainly to establish and maintain a facility for diagnosing and treating children and young adults who suffer from mental health problems or related physical problems, or who are at risk of suffering from those mental health or physical problems, and to raise funds for this facility.

VISITORS

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to inform the House today that we have two members of the St-Victor school here, who have successfully passed the test to attend a full week here at the Ontario Legislature. The two students I have here with me today are Caroline Blondin and Roxanne Taillon. They're in the gallery up there.

PRESS GALLERY CHRISTMAS AUCTION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You would like to know, and so would the House, that thanks to 160 generous donations from cabinet ministers, MPPs of all political stripes, corporations and others, the annual press gallery Christmas auction has raised about \$13,500 for the United Way of Greater Toronto, making this year's Christmas auction the most successful yet.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): More important, the member for St Catharines has finished his Christmas shopping.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With respect to the issue we raised earlier in asking for unanimous consent in remembering the 14 young women who were killed in Montreal on December 6, 1989, as you know, every year since that tragic event took place, there have been statements with unanimous consent.

Interjections.

The Speaker: You know what? I think they agree. Let's try again. Agreed?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Our particular representative who wanted to speak on that issue was not present when the unanimous consent was requested. That's why we said no. I would ask for that unanimous consent again.

The Speaker: The member for Dovercourt has already asked for unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

JOURNÉE DU SOUVENIR ET D'ACTION CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

Nine years ago this Sunday, 14 women were gunned down in a university classroom in Montreal; 14 engineering students targeted merely because they were women. Marc Lepine, the man who did the shooting, was mentally ill. He was driven by an insane hatred of women. But the sad truth is that negative attitudes towards women motivate violent acts against them every day.

Des images de cette horrible journée présentées à la télévision ou dans les journaux sont gravées à jamais dans la mémoire de bon nombre de Canadiens et Canadiennes de toutes les régions du pays. Il est bien que neuf années plus tard, nous nous rappelons cette journée et cette tragédie. Il est bien que nous nous rappelons cet immense deuil et de toute l'horreur de ce drame, mais nous devons également nous rappeler que les femmes continuent d'être les victimes de la violence dans nos rues et dans leur foyer.

There may be a greater awareness that domestic violence is a crime, but incidents of domestic violence are increasing, not decreasing. The sad truth is that not everyone believes women and men are equals or that violence against women is completely unacceptable. Demeaning, negative attitudes towards women still exist.

Those same attitudes led to the tragic death of Arlene May on March 8, 1996, near Collingwood in our province. Unlike the 14 women killed in Montreal, Arlene May didn't die at the hands of a stranger. Like most victims of domestic violence, Arlene May was killed by a man she knew, a jealous, obsessive boyfriend; a man who repeatedly threatened to kill her; a man out on bail for the fourth time for stalking and assaulting her; a man who was able to go out and buy the shotgun he would later use to kill Arlene May.

I think it would be a terrible mistake to allow ourselves to become desensitized to the events in Montreal that December day nine years ago or to dismiss that act simply as one of a madman. The facts are that many Ontario women will experience acts of violence and abuse today, and most of these acts will go unnoticed and unpunished by the rest of us. These women — our mothers, our sisters and our daughters — will continue to lead lives of quiet and painful desperation.

1400

As legislators, I'm sure that we all agree that we bear a heavy responsibility to enact tough laws that will protect women against all forms of violence and abuse. We must continue to provide supports to survivors of abuse to allow them to break out of the vicious cycle that they are trapped in.

I share the belief of Ontarians, as a strong supporter of gun controls, that the recent tightening of controls and the

introduction of a gun registry system will reduce the risks that many women face.

The great tragedy of December 6, 1989, is the loss not only of those 14 bright young women and all they represented to their families and friends, but also the loss of all that they were to become during the remainder of their promising lives.

Geneviève Bergeron, 21, was a second-year scholarship student in civil engineering. Hélène Colgan, 23, was in her final year of mechanical engineering and planned to take her masters degree. Nathalie Croteau, 23, was in her final year of mechanical engineering. Barbara Daigneault, 22, was in her final year of mechanical engineering and held a teaching assistantship. Anne-Marie Edward, 21, was a first-year student in chemical engineering.

Maud Haviernick, 29, was a second-year student in engineering materials, a branch of metallurgy, and a graduate in environmental design. Barbara Maria Klucznik, 31, was a second-year engineering student specializing in engineering materials. Maryse Laganière, 25, worked in the budget department of the polytechnique. Maryse Leclair, 23, was a fourth-year student in engineering materials. Anne-Marie Lemay, 27, was a fourth-year student in mechanical engineering.

Sonia Pelletier, 28, was to graduate the next day in mechanical engineering; she was awarded a degree posthumously. Michèle Richard, 21, was a second-year student in engineering materials. Annie St-Arneault, 23, was a mechanical engineering student. Annie Turcotte, 21, was a first-year student in engineering materials. Fourteen bright flames abruptly extinguished.

December 6, this Sunday, is national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

We have a special obligation on that day in particular to remember these 14 women. But we also have an obligation every day throughout the year to do what we can to ensure that no harm comes to the women in Ontario who are, after all, our mothers, our sisters and our daughters.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I thank the government for allowing unanimous consent today.

This week we remember a tragic event in the history of this nation. This week we remember 14 bright young women who were murdered at École polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989.

These 14 women were executed because the gunman saw them as a threat, the object of his rage. We all have a responsibility in this. We have a responsibility to the women who were murdered and to all of the women who remain. We have a responsibility to our daughters, our friends, our mothers, our sisters, our aunts, our cousins. We need to teach our children. We need to ensure that events like the one in Montreal on December 6, 1989, are never forgotten — which is partly what this is all about today — and never repeated.

To do this, we need to root out both violence and the attitudes that allow women to be second-class citizens, attitudes that sometimes cause women to be victims in society rather than equal participants.

Tomorrow I will once again be participating in a heart-breaking ceremony where I join with my colleagues from both parties and others to remember the 14 young women who were shot that terrible day nine years ago. I will once again hold a red rose representing the life of one of the women who died. Her name will be called and I will walk to a vase and put that rose in, along with 13 other red roses, each rose representing a life. I will think of that young woman then, the one my rose represents. I will imagine her before that day and just before the horrible incident, full of energy and promise, bright-eyed and full of life as she prepared to become an engineer. I will think of her parents and her family and the unimaginable anguish and agony that they must have experienced, and the grief and the pain and horror that they must feel to this day.

I think of all the women who have been murdered and terrorized by their spouses and lovers and how very much I want the life of my own daughter to be free of sexual harassment and free of the fear of violence from men. Government has a role of paramount importance. As I said, if nothing else, we must learn from this tragic event.

Today we are remembering the women who were shot, but it is necessary to point out that violence against women is an all-too-common occurrence in our society. Over the past three years, 82 women and children in Ontario died at the hands of their abusive spouses and countless others were severely injured. Thousands of women experience sexual harassment in the workplace. This harassment can result in death, as it did for Theresa Vince of Chatham.

Our vision of equality must lead us to a world where girls and women are safe in their homes, schools, on the street and in the workplace.

I would like to read a portion of the mission statement of the White Ribbon Campaign that describes violence against women:

"If it were between countries, we'd call it a war. If it were a disease, we'd call it an epidemic. If it were an oil spill, we'd call it a disaster. Violence against women in our society is all of those things."

Today, the Ontario NDP and the Ontario Federation of Labour released a joint statement on violence against women. I'd like to read from part of that statement now:

"We call on men themselves to speak out and honour the prescribed steps of reporting, challenging and eradicating violence against women. We recognize that positive male role models engaged in dialogue with their male peers is another effective tool in quelling violence against women. While women speak for women, men should speak to men and support women."

"December 6, 1998, is the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. As a symbol, we call on men everywhere to show their support for women by turning on their porch light or placing a light in their front windows on the evening of Saturday, December 6. On this day we call on all men throughout Ontario and across Canada to begin helping shed the light of awareness on the problem of violence against women

by pledging to speak out against it, counsel other men, report suspected abuse cases and stand as a role model who shows no tolerance for any man's physical, emotional or verbal abuse of women."

I hope that all members of the House will support this statement and turn on your porch light on December 6 in honour of the 14 young women who died on December 6, 1989, and for all of the women who remain.

1410

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): On December 6 across the country we mark the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. On this day in 1989, 14 young women in Montreal were murdered because they were women. As we reflect on this terrible loss, we must never forget that many women continue to live and die in the shadow of violence.

My colleagues the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women are committed to working together to end the violence against women. The evidence of our commitment is clear today as each and every one of us across Canada makes a declaration on violence against women, a declaration that was agreed to with enthusiasm and commitment at our meeting in September in Iqaluit. I read:

"Today, I join all my colleagues across the country, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women, in a declaration of our commitment to end violence against women."

"Violence against women has devastating consequences in many women's lives and significant social and economic repercussions for society as a whole. Every day, women are intimidated, harassed, stalked, assaulted and abused, often at the hands of an intimate partner. As a society, we cannot and must not tolerate this violence. We must recognize and address the root causes of violence against women and the underlying issues of power and control."

"The ministers responsible for the status of women share a vision of safe, healthy communities where women are not exposed to violence or even the threat of violence. Our vision is based on the full equality of women and men. We stress the importance of culturally appropriate and community-based solutions that take into account linguistic, cultural and geographic diversity, that respect aboriginal values and culture and that reflect the particular needs of vulnerable groups."

"To achieve this vision, all of society must take responsibility. The elimination of violence is a long-term goal which can only be realized through lasting change in societal values and attitudes. Governments cannot achieve this goal alone. Individuals, service providers, voluntary and professional organizations, the broader public and corporate sectors all have a role to play. It is important that men, as well as women, participate in finding solutions."

"Sustained action is required, combined with innovative, creative approaches. It is particularly important that

programs and services be flexible in their design and delivery in order to be accessible and effective. In this comprehensive effort, strong coordination across all sectors is essential, first and foremost to provide safety, as well as to deal with perpetrators and to prevent violence before it happens.

"Our work to end violence against women is guided by the following principles:

"Living free of violence is a right, not a privilege.

"Violence against women is a crime and should never be considered a private matter. Crimes of violence must be dealt with accordingly.

"Safety for victims and survivors must come first.

"In order to eliminate violence against women, equality and healthy relationships among boys and girls must be promoted from an early age.

"Our approach is built on three key strategies: a long-term focus on public education and awareness to change attitudes and behaviour; accessible and responsive services to provide safety and support to victims and prevent revictimization; and effective justice programs to hold perpetrators accountable and provide treatment programs for abusive men.

"On many fronts, our governments have shown their determination to end violence against women. Through our policies and initiatives across the country and our leadership at the international level in ratifying United Nations conventions and supporting UN action plans, we have clearly articulated the unacceptable and intolerable nature of this violence.

"Much work has been done to address violence against women. We will continue to build on the expertise of women's groups and other community partners and, together, we will work to improve the effectiveness of our efforts through ongoing partnership, consultation, evaluation and research.

"As federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women, we reaffirm our determination to stop violence against women. This is a top priority for our governments. Our commitment will be realized through the actions of each jurisdiction. Together, these actions will enable us to meet the challenges and achieve our goal. We owe it to all women who may be affected by violence, now and in the future."

Mr Speaker, could we stand for a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 95(d), Mr Martiniuk exchange places with Mr Leadston and Ms Churley exchange places with Mr Silipo in the order of precedence for private members' public business; and that notwith-

standing standing order 95(g), the notice requirement be waived with respect to private members' ballot items 38 and 39.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Today is International Day of Disabled Persons. In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly asked member states to observe this day "with a view to furthering the integration into society of persons with disabilities."

Ontario has a long history of leadership in addressing the concerns of persons with disabilities. Thirty-six years ago, it was the first province in Canada to adopt a human rights code. The code was amended in 1981 to extend protection on the basis of disability. Recently, this government introduced a proposed Ontarians with Disabilities Act that is the first of its kind in Canada.

Our government is leading by example. Bill 83 will mandate all government ministries to systematically review their legislation, programs, policies, practices and services, with a view to preventing and removing barriers. Ministries will have to submit annual plans outlining what they will review, what actions they will take to remove barriers and what they have already done to improve accessibility.

In time, the proposed Ontarians with Disabilities Act will affect thousands of government activities and millions of Ontarians.

This is a day to renew our commitment as a community to improving access for persons with disabilities in all aspects of our society. Preventing and removing barriers to participation is a shared responsibility, and co-operative solutions are the best way to achieve results. In that regard, I am delighted to announce that the province will be partnering with the Conference Board of Canada to assist Ontario employers to increase workplace accessibility.

The conference board has research capabilities and expertise that is widely respected. It will conduct research to identify current approaches and best practices for barrier removal in the workplace. The results will form the basis for discussions involving disability groups, employers and the government's recently announced Committee on Employment for Persons with Disabilities, among others, to develop win-win solutions and practical ways of removing employment barriers to persons with disabilities.

The government is also establishing an information and referral service and setting up an \$800,000 incentive fund

to promote best practices and partnerships in communities across Ontario.

These and other actions by successive Ontario governments to support persons with disabilities bring us steadily closer to our vision of an Ontario where every person can achieve his or her full potential. They bring us steadily closer to the United Nations' vision of furthering the integration into society of persons with disabilities.

By working together as a community, we can reach this goal. We can build a strong and caring society where persons with disabilities have equal opportunity to fully participate in our great province.

1420

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): Three years ago, this government set out to improve Ontario's auto insurance system, restore fairness and stabilize rates.

Since our reforms came into effect in November 1996, Ontario drivers have benefited from an average filed rate reduction of almost 11%. This is in stark contrast to the records of the Liberal and NDP governments, both of which handed Ontario drivers skyrocketing auto insurance rates. For those who shop around in today's competitive marketplace, prices are even lower — down as much as 18%. Our reforms literally put the brakes on higher auto insurance rates.

But we didn't stop there:

We established the first Ombudsman for auto insurance in Canada.

We required insurers to offer discounts for retirees and prohibit insurers from using minor lapses in coverage as a rating factor.

We imposed higher fines for driving without insurance and tougher penalties for those who attempt to defraud the system.

We reformed the Facility Association so that today half as many drivers are in FA as were in that association a year ago.

We established a task force to make recommendations on an accreditation system for rehabilitation clinics treating auto accident victims.

We set up a committee to oversee the independent designated assessment centres.

After implementing these reforms, we monitored the system and consulted with stakeholders on other ways to improve it. Specifically, we received input from numerous consumers, health care providers, lawyers, brokers and insurance industry officials. They told us the system is working well, but a little fine-tuning is in order.

We heard how applying the current definition of "catastrophic impairment" to children may be too restrictive and that rehabilitating children who have been injured in auto accidents can be more costly and complex when compared to adults. We were asked to increase the ability to sue for excess health care expenses for children.

We heard that deductibles, which are intended to deter frivolous lawsuits, are penalizing the most seriously injured accident victims. We were asked to eliminate these deductibles.

The bill I introduced today, if passed, will recognize the special needs of children and will ensure that injured accident victims receive the treatment they need while keeping auto insurance rates low. It includes provisions to improve access to the courts for children injured in auto accidents and to eliminate the deductible for pain and suffering damages for all accident victims in larger awards. The bill will also protect consumers in the event of an insurer insolvency.

Last, insurance agents will be required to disclose to consumers that they represent only one company, should they do so, and that therefore creates an even playing field with insurance brokers who are currently required to disclose whom they represent.

This bill will support initiatives resulting from our two-year review and will increase fairness and efficiency while maintaining a balanced and stable auto insurance system in Ontario.

VOLUNTEER LIABILITY

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): Earlier this afternoon I introduced the Emergency Volunteers Protection Act. This legislation would ensure that, in case of injury, volunteer fire and ambulance workers across the province are protected under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

I would like to thank my colleague Ted Arnott, the MPP for Wellington, for taking the lead in bringing this initiative before the House. I also understand that all parties have indicated their intention to support these legislative proposals.

As everyone who has ever lived in rural Ontario knows, smaller communities rely on the courage and commitment of volunteers to lend a helping hand to their fellow citizens in times of crisis — a willingness to drop everything and come to the aid of their neighbour. These individuals deserve their communities' gratitude and respect. They need to be assured that, in the unfortunate event of an injury resulting from these volunteer activities, it would not create undue hardship to them or to their families.

This bill, if passed, would address concerns raised by municipalities and volunteer emergency workers, reduce red tape for municipalities and ensure that volunteers would not be penalized for selflessly coming to the aid of their neighbours. The legislation would also allow municipalities to select the amount of coverage for volunteer firefighters or ambulance workers.

It places an obligation on the full-time or part-time employer of the injured volunteer to continue employment benefits, and to co-operate in return to work and offer re-employment. These obligations would ensure consistency in the treatment of emergency workers, such as ice storm

volunteers and members of volunteer firefighter and ambulance brigades.

I would like to thank the municipal leaders and the volunteer firefighters for bringing this matter to our attention, in particular the volunteer detachment of Oro-Medonte township. Representatives from that township's volunteer fire force are here today, as well as representatives from other volunteer firefighters across Ontario. I thank you for being with us today.

This bill supports the volunteer spirit as the backbone of self-reliant and safe communities. The government has listened and is acting today. I strongly urge each and every member of the Legislature to work for the speedy passage of this bill.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): This government had the gall last week to introduce something it calls the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This legislation gives them nothing of substance that persons with disabilities have asked for. This legislation is not worth the paper it's written on. It's an insult and a betrayal of this government's promise and people's hopes.

While this government is all about public relations and positive spin on complex and troubling issues, we in the real world need to face reality eye to eye. The situation that most people with disabilities face is more than most of us could handle.

It doesn't have to be this way. The minister says the government is going to try harder, get its own house in order and encourage others to do the same. Great. After stalling on an ODA for three and a half years, this is all we get.

Where are the provisions for persons with disabilities to be actively involved in addressing barriers? Where are the enforcement mechanisms? You know very well that former Chief Justice Brian Dickson told you that no measures were going to work without mandatory provisions. You know that the underfunded and overburdened Ontario Human Rights Commission cannot protect persons with disabilities against systemic barriers.

This government hides behind lists of program names and funding promises that are announced over and over again. Ask those with disabilities whether their lives are any easier, as the government claims they are. This government wants to say that they have kept their promises whether their announcements have any substance or not.

Bill 83 must be withdrawn. It is time to make it possible for persons with disabilities to come in the front door and take their rightful place in the life of this province.

Minister, let me make my own recommendation, my own suggestion to you. Convince your colleagues at the cabinet to re-establish a ministry responsible for the disabled, as we had in government before when we were in power. The idea was abandoned. Try it. It works well.

VOLUNTEER LIABILITY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I am glad to have the opportunity to respond briefly to the Minister of Labour about his bill. Let me begin by saying that we in the official opposition will support this bill and we join in applauding Ted Arnett, the MPP for Wellington, in forcing this issue. We also wish to pay our respects to volunteer firefighters throughout the province.

But I do want to remind the government and the people listening that this bill is about cleaning up a mess that the previous Minister of Labour started when she jammed through Bill 99, didn't listen to public consultations, didn't have full hearings and didn't respond at the time that this issue was brought up.

It's appropriate too that we should be talking about persons with disabilities today. That is going to be another mess that has to be cleaned up, a mess that the minister responsible for the disabled refused to deal with in her Ontarians with Disabilities Act flop, her non-bill.

There are a lot of messes that are going to have to be cleaned up. There's a health care system that's an absolute mess because this government has pushed through things that nobody supports and agrees with, without putting in the kinds of supports we need.

Education: messes everywhere. We look at standardized test scores. What has the government done to improve them? Absolutely nothing.

Yes, today is important, and we support this particular bill because it cleans up one small mess, but there are a lot of other messes, much larger messes, be it closed hospitals or closed schools. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party will clean up the mess next year.

1430

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I take the opportunity to reply to the Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for privatization and insurance. He's introduced amendments today which we have little time to respond to directly, but in looking over his statement I remember the day the minister was trying to tell me how great his bill was and his attempt to convince me that it actually was moving back towards the Liberal no-fault insurance we had had prior to this, yet today I guess he included us with the most recent record of high insurance rates.

I also see that in the areas that are being changed, updated and improved after two years, as I recall, these were areas that were brought to the government's attention at that time that needed to be fixed, when the original bill was brought in. We're pleased to see that now, albeit it's two years later, it's being done.

VOLUNTEER LIABILITY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I respond to the announcement today by the Minister of

Labour. I noted that in his remarks he said we owe volunteer firefighters our gratitude and our respect. On behalf of the New Democratic caucus let me say we agree, but I think the minister ought to extend that and acknowledge the fact that all workers deserve the gratitude and respect of him and every other member of this Legislature, which you sure as hell didn't show when you rammed through your Bill 99.

Let's understand why we're giving Ted Arnott credit here today. He finally stepped forward and convinced you and your caucus that even though it was embarrassing, you had to fix your mistake. You denied those firefighters their rights under Bill 99, just like you denied every other worker's rights under Bill 99. While the Liberals may say they're going to support this and tinker with it, let me say here on behalf of the NDP, we will repeal the entire Bill 99 and show gratitude and respect for every worker in this province.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): It's remarkable. It's only this government that can include the words "fairness" and "auto insurance" in the same sentence. They're mutually exclusive. They always have been and they always will be.

This minister doesn't understand that his efforts at reform are preceded by the efforts 10 years ago of the government of the day, by the efforts seven years ago and now by the feckless efforts of Rob Sampson and Mike Harris to once again cater to the whim and fancy of an ever increasingly greedy insurance industry that has the proverbial short arms and deep pockets, that's very efficient when it comes to collecting premiums but sadly pathetic and not at all forthcoming when it comes to paying out benefits.

This government talks about reduced premiums. I've been talking to premium payers across this province. They're frantically searching for some of those reduced premiums because the filings may show an average reduction in premiums, but the filings don't reflect the actual premiums charged after a highly discretionary imposition of penalties and surcharges on drivers across Ontario.

We're looking forward to public hearings on this bill because I want to hear from the insurance industry. I want to have them tell us about their unprecedented new profits that are the result of unprecedented new low levels of first-party coverage and the fact that this government hasn't required them to pass those new profits on by way of benefits or premium reductions.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): This is International Day for Persons with Disabilities, and I want to acknowledge the tremendous work done by people with disabilities in this province and especially by the

Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, which has had to fight this government every step of the way. Their drive and determination is an example to all of us. Unfortunately, this government still isn't listening to them.

It is perhaps very appropriate that this international day will be followed tomorrow by the release of a report from the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. That committee has been studying Canada's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Among the questions it has asked Ontario is, why did the Harris government abolish the Employment Equity Act provisions that would have helped people with disabilities get into the workforce? We can only wonder what the UN committee will have to say about Bill 83, a slap in the face to Ontarians with disabilities.

The committee also asked about measures to address poverty among people with disabilities. Getting assistance is another issue. We are beginning to hear about the problems people are experiencing with the Ontario disability support program. They are waiting months to have their applications approved. In some cases the applications are being rejected because their family physician has not filled them out in a technically correct manner or doesn't have all of the minutiae of information.

The Ontario Medical Association says that many doctors do not have enough information to fill out all of the minutiae questions that are on this eight-page Activities of Daily Living report. It's a one-size-fits-all form, like so many things this government does. One applicant who has a psychiatric disability told the London Free Press, "Under this government, it seems that as long as I can have a bath and I can put on a tie, I'm not disabled."

But the most telling side of this government's attitude is Bill 83, a fraud that is being perpetrated on people with disabilities.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to bring to the attention of the House, in the west members' gallery, Mr Walt Elliot, the representative in the 34th Parliament for Halton North. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. You will be aware that there is a coroner's inquest presently taking place into the very tragic death of young Kyle Martyn, a five-year-old who died after a three-hour wait in the crowded Credit Valley Hospital emergency room. Quite apart from that very real and compelling tragedy, this

inquest is lending some real insight into the effects of your funding cuts.

David Rowe, who is the vice-president of Credit Valley Hospital, tells us that his hospital is running a deficit of \$300,000 every month, it's operating 27 of its 229 beds without funding, he is on an ongoing basis cancelling surgery and redirecting ambulances, and he still, to this day, cannot accommodate the flood of patients coming in from his growing region.

When will you admit that it is your policies that are creating distress for our hospitals, which is in turn creating distress for Ontario patients?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Certainly the case to which the member refers is a very tragic case. However, since that is currently being looked at by the coroner, it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I'm not asking that you speak to the issue and the facts surrounding the death of the child. I'm asking about the impact of your policies on this hospital. That's all I'm talking about here.

Mr Rowe said that the crisis in his hospital is due to provincial underfunding. He tells us that while the population in Credit Valley's district has grown 32% since 1992, his \$100-million annual budget is slightly less today than what it was in 1992. The patient group he is responsible for has increased by 32% and he is getting less money today than he did in 1992. This is the result of your policies. Why don't you stand up now and admit that your policies when it comes to health care in Ontario are causing distress to our hospitals, which is in turn causing distress to Ontario patients?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the member opposite knows, we are working and have been working very hard with all hospitals in this province in order to discuss any concerns or suggestions they have. However, in this instance I'm not in a position, since there is an inquest taking place, to make any further comments.

1440

Mr McGuinty: Let's take it to another hospital, then, if the minister's not prepared to comment with respect to that hospital, quite independent of the inquest.

Here's what a nurse at St Joseph's Health Centre in London said:

"I see fear in patients' eyes when they come to my hospital. We are seeing an increase in the alarm rate that people are having in reaction to the cuts in funding and to the fact that quality of health care has worsened over the past two years in Ontario."

In Toronto, we've seen ambulances turned away and redirected on an ongoing basis. We know hospitals across the province today are struggling with deficits. We've got stressed-out doctors, demoralized nurses. We've got frightened patients and very concerned families.

You are causing harm to health care in Ontario. People on the front lines are experiencing this and patients are being harmed as a result. When will you admit that your health care policies are hurting hospitals and hurting patient care?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Unfortunately, it was the lack of courage on the part of your government and the previous government that has contributed to a situation where Ontario was the very last province to embark upon hospital restructuring.

Within the last year, I have met on about 15 occasions with nurses in this province in order to understand the problems and the issues and the concerns that they had, issues and concerns that other governments didn't deal with.

As you know, we have moved forward and we have adopted every one of the recommendations that nurses made in May 1996. They indicated to us the need to invest in long-term care, and we have. We've invested \$1.2 billion. We've invested —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — in additional beds. We've invested in additional long-term-care services. We have introduced the nurse practitioner legislation. We have made available —

The Speaker: New question, official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: A question to the same minister. The proof is in the pudding. Get out of this place and speak to patients if you want a first-hand account as to what the impacts of your policies are in Ontario.

I want to talk about the crisis you've created in our emergency rooms right across the province. Your funding cuts led to that, very clearly. Then in April, after months of backlogged ERs and pressure from us, you announced that you were going to take action. Then you said you were going to set up 1,700 interim long-term-care beds. Six months later, on October 22 of this year, you finally announced the location of 707 of these interim long-term-care beds. Your press release specifically said they'd be occupied by December of this year and that money would flow as soon as they were occupied.

Can you tell us today how many patients have been transferred from our hospitals into our interim long-term-care beds in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, we have a situation here that had been ongoing since the time of your government. In fact, I can look at some of these stories that occurred when you were in office. Quoting from the Ottawa Citizen of December 26, 1987, it says an elderly woman was turned away from two area hospitals on the weekend and died Christmas Day.

I would say to the member opposite, we took action where your government took no action. Yes, we made available 1,700 long-term-care beds, and as my colleague the Minister of Long-Term Care has indicated, the response was insufficient. He has been extremely busy in order that we can ensure that hospitals and communities across this province work together to provide those beds because there wasn't the uptake by the hospitals.

Mr McGuinty: Your press release said those interim long-term-care beds would be occupied by December: 707. Do you know how many are up and running now? Not one. We're closing in on the Christmas season, which is extremely busy for our hospitals. We've got to do

everything we can to relieve the backlog in our emergency rooms. That was the purpose of your announcement back in April of this year, that you were going to set up long-term-care beds on an interim basis.

In Ottawa-Carleton, the Ottawa hospital hasn't been able to transfer a single patient to the interim long-term-care beds awarded to the Sisters of Charity. We've got a building in Ottawa, we've got the staff in Ottawa, we've got 39 interim long-term-care beds, but we haven't got any patients and we haven't got the funding.

When are you going to execute on your promise? You said those beds would be up and running by December. There's not a single one up and running now. We've got a building in Ottawa, we've got the patients, we've got to staff; we don't have the money. When are we going to move forward on this?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The Leader of the Opposition stands up and indicates there's a problem. It's unfortunate that under your watch you were not as concerned as you appear to be today. I can go back to the Ottawa Citizen, December 24, 1987. It talks about redirecting ambulances to another hospital.

The good thing is that our government actually recognized there was a problem. Our government did set up an emergency task force. Our government did make money available. Unfortunately, the original uptake was not what we had hoped for, so now the Minister of Long-Term Care has been working with communities across this province to address exactly the issue you speak about; that is, to ensure that those 1,700 beds are up as soon as possible.

Mr McGuinty: Eight months ago, in response to a problem that you created by cutting funding to our hospitals, you said you were taking action and you were going to set up 1,700 interim long-term-care beds. Today there is not a single one up and running in Ontario. We're coming into the holiday season. Our emergency wards are going to be crowded. We need to relieve that congestion. We need to relieve space in other parts of the hospitals. That's where the interim long-term-care beds come in. Why is it that today, eight months later, there is not a single interim long-term-care bed set up in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I've listened to the Leader of the Opposition, and certainly he has gone on and on for several years now, but unfortunately I haven't heard his solution to any of the health issues. He has brought no policy forward whatsoever.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Minister, you must know of the shocking epidemic of occupational disease and death among former workers at the Owens-Corning Canada fibreglass plant in Sarnia. The plant was closed a number of years ago, but more and more of the former workers are now dying of lung disease, kidney cancer and other forms of cancer.

In fact, some of the former workers who are suffering, and members of the families of deceased workers, are here today, along with members of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. What they want to know from you is this: Will you expedite the compensation claims? Will you provide adequate funding for occupational health clinic staff? Will you make public all the available documentation on conditions at the plant? Will you act to make sure this never happens again in Ontario?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): I thank the honourable member for his question. I can assure him and all members that occupational health and safety is the number one priority at the ministry.

The reforms that have been effected to the workers' safety and insurance system in Ontario have been designed to make sure that the system is operated on sound insurance principles and that it is in a position to honour the present and future claims of all persons entitled under that legislation.

1450

With respect to the issue that the honourable member raises about occupational disease and specific diseases, as he may know, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board has commissioned a comprehensive provincial research strategy into workplace illnesses, particularly the type of concerns that the honourable member has mentioned. This is headed by Dr Bob Norman of the University of Waterloo. It is anticipated that this type of continuing study will help address these specific workplace illness issues which the honourable member knows are not without complications.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary, member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): First of all, I don't think that was an adequate assurance for the workers and their families and representatives who are here today in terms of what they're facing. Their plant is gone. These workers are sick. They are dying. One of the people here is a widow of one of those workers. They need more than what you've offered here today.

Let's look at the larger picture which you alluded to in part of your response. What are you doing, exactly, to update the legal limits for exposure to toxic substances in the workplace and to make sure that those limits are enforced? When you were elected, there was in place a Joint Steering Committee on Hazardous Substances in the Workplace. It was ready to start issuing regulations. You killed it. Then your previous minister, your predecessor, Minister Witmer, said she was going to start looking at these substances one at a time and direct that limits be lowered where necessary.

What's been done so far? Nothing. Not a thing. No work at all in this area. How many workers in Sarnia and other communities have to die before you recognize the need to lower some of those limits?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I thank the member for the further supplementary question. The issue of occupational disease is a very serious issue. It is taken very seriously by this

government and certainly by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

The bipartite labour-employer joint steering committee that he refers to, the one on hazardous substances, existed for eight years in this province, from November 1987 to October 1995. During that eight-year period, the JSC did not provide any recommendations for regulatory change or status quo to the minister; absolutely zero work product in eight years from that committee.

On the other hand, we have proceeded with an occupational health and safety review with full consultations for a period of more than a year in Ontario; more than 225 submissions. We are listening. We are consulting. As I've mentioned, we're proceeding with a study on the diagnosis and treatment of occupational disease, a very important, complicated issue that needs to be addressed in the province.

Mr Christopherson: The fact of the matter is, Minister, when you arrived in the ministry and when your predecessor —

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr Christopherson: As I was saying, when you arrived, there were regulations there all ready to go, draft regulations that were dated April 1995, ready for you to finalize and implement. They could have been done within the first few months of your government taking office, and you didn't do it. You left the regulations sitting there. You killed the joint committee that was working. Since then, what else have you done? You've done worse than nothing: You've killed the Occupational Disease Panel.

Minister, you and your predecessor know that panel had international support. Public health and safety organizations and workplace health and safety organizations from around the world said: "Please don't kill the Occupational Disease Panel. You're a model here in Ontario for the sort of things that ought to be happening." You killed it. You sat on the regulations. You killed the committee. You've done nothing.

There is clear evidence that metalworking fluids can be moved. There's an exposure that can be moved right now. Will you move on those exposures and will you bring in this regulation that's ready to go?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Where were you for the last year?

The Speaker: Member for Grey-Owen Sound, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Flaherty: I thank the member for the further supplementary question on this very important matter of occupational disease. He knows it's complicated. Everyone who looks at the issue knows how complicated it is when you're trying to relate diseases that develop over time with conditions in the workplace. The Ministry of Labour is preparing a strategy for dealing with hazardous substances that will include extensive public consultations. The majority of occupational exposure limits in Ontario are matters that have been reviewed. As I've indicated to you, the Workers' Safety and Insurance Board is proceeding with work, overseen by the board's

research advisory council. This is prudent, thorough research which I'm sure the honourable member would find appropriate to address these crucial issues in Ontario.

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the minister responsible for women's issues. Here's a chance to do something really substantive to mark December 6. In 1995, your government slashed funding for 24-hour crisis lines for abused women. The assaulted women's help line in Toronto was cut by 5%, while the need for the service is increasing each year. They received 26,380 calls in 1997 alone, but Bell monitored the lines and discovered there's a 91% chance women calling that line will get a busy signal, and over that one year, 50,000 desperate women called the line and couldn't get through.

The assaulted women's help line needs at least six more lines to come close to meeting the current demand. It will cost you \$600,000 to do this. Will you do it?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): The member opposite knows that we have hundreds of programs across nine ministries, this being just one of them, to support the prevention of violence against women. She also knows that we actually have an increase over the annual funding that was allocated in 1994-95. We're spending over \$100 million. In 1997 we spent 27 million new dollars over three years, and we're the first government to have a comprehensive approach. I would suggest that the member opposite make a presentation, along with that centre or in any way she wants, to the minister responsible for that funding and perhaps there would be some consideration.

The point is, we are spending more money. We have stresses on some of the programs, but we're very proud of the new initiatives across some nine ministries that have been put in place in response to a very public report where we received very specific recommendations.

Ms Churley: I'm really getting tired of you standing up and repeating the same things over and over again. You love to play with numbers. The reality is that you cut these lines. I'm giving you the opportunity today to show some leadership and some compassion here, for you to go back to the cabinet table and demand this \$600,000 for this help line.

Let me paint you a picture of what it's like to not have those phones operating. An abused woman has lived in terror and shame for years. She finally gets up the courage to make that call, to find a way out and save her children and herself. Maybe her husband has left her for a few minutes and this is her one chance to make that call, but she gets a busy signal. Will she ever call again? Will she give up? Does she think there's no way out?

This is critical. It's about access and early intervention. We're only talking about \$600,000 a year. That's a lot less than a government TV propaganda ad. Will you today say you will go and fight for that money yourself at the cabinet table?

1500

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Just a couple of pieces of information for the member. This weekend there will be many ads in support of stopping wife abuse and domestic violence. We're also, as we know, making our plans for our budget next year, and the member knows we will be looking at all possibilities. I can assure the honourable member that as we sit down in the next few weeks, as Mr Eves has already stated in the House this week, to plan the budget for the spring, we'll be looking towards these kinds of needs. That agency along with other agencies will have an opportunity, I'm sure, to make their cases and bring forward their concerns, as the member for Riverdale has done today, to the appropriate ministers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Final supplementary.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Minister, it's not just the help lines you've shut down. In your role to show some leadership here, you're actually taking Ontario backwards, not forwards. Let me give you another example. There used to be funding available through government for men who recognized that they had a problem and that they needed help in terms of either verbal abuse or physical abuse or even the potential for sexual abuse. Your government eliminated that. Now, the only time a man can get help in terms of counselling is if he's already been charged by police after the fact.

Minister, here's the question for you: Will your government put back in place the funding so that men who know they have a problem can get some help in terms of counselling before they commit an offence, before the police have to become involved, before women are hurt?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I stand before this Legislative Assembly to say that we're very proud in Ontario of the framework for violence with regard to programs to stop violence against women across some nine ministries. It's a precedent in Canada that's being looked at to be adopted by other provinces and territories.

Having said that, there's always more to do. The honourable member opposite is raising a concern. Programs for men who are abusive do exist in our communities. They're not all focused to people who are there because of the court system. They are for other reasons as well. But I will underline, as I've already done to his colleague the member for Riverdale, that we are assessing our programs. We do that on an annual basis. The time is appropriate for the member and the agencies that have a challenge to bring their case forward, which I understand they are doing, to the appropriate ministries and ministers.

ABORIGINAL HEALING AND WELLNESS STRATEGY

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Health. The minister will be aware of a very successful program called the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy that is doing exceptionally good work in our First Nations community right across the province, in community health and family violence. The

evaluation indicates suicide in some communities is cut in half. This program needs the government's agreement to proceed before the end of December. If they don't get that approval, they have to give layoff notices to 300 people who are doing very sensitive community services. The evaluation's been done and it is an extremely successful program.

My question to the minister is this: Can you provide the community with the assurance that the program will continue, and can you give the House the assurance that they will have that information before the end of December so they will not have to proceed with the very disruptive layoff notices that otherwise will have to take place?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I'll refer that to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I thank the honourable member very much for the question. Yes, he can have the assurance of this government that they will receive the answer before any of those kinds of decisions have to be made. He is quite right, the evaluation had indicated that this program has done some very, very positive things in the aboriginal community.

Mr Phillips: I want to be sure I understand what the answer was. They need the answer by the end of December. The evaluations are universally positive. I think the community is anxious as to why they couldn't have gotten the answer already, obviously, with something this successful. But did the minister say that, first, this government has the intention to proceed with the program; second, it is the intention of the government to make that known to the community before the end of December this year; and, third, at that time they will also announce the funding for the community to proceed with this program for the foreseeable future?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I think one of the things that is a very good, positive step about this particular strategy is the evaluation mechanism that is in it, because it is giving us the opportunity to judge very clearly and to see the benefits that this program has had in aboriginal communities. We certainly are aware of the time frames. They will indeed have an answer, and my understanding is there is no reason why that answer will not be positive.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is also to the minister responsible for community and social services. The question is this, Minister: There are a whole lot of aboriginal organizations out there working in aboriginal communities and in non-native communities to promote health and well-being and actually to save the health care system a lot of money. They need to know that the money is going to be there, not in February, not in March, not next July. They need to know the money is going to be there now.

1510

Minister, the question you have to answer is a very simple one: When are they going to receive the money so that they can do the planning, they can do the organization, they won't have to lay people off and they can continue to provide the programs that are saving your Ministry of Health a lot of money? When will they get the money?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We're well aware of the positive value and the good work that this strategy has done in many aboriginal communities across this province. I know that other ministers and I have had the opportunity to meet with members of First Nations and to see first-hand the value of this program and what it has done.

As I think the honourable member is probably aware, yes, they deserve and will be receiving an answer very shortly. As I said, it's my understanding that it will be a positive answer. But as he also knows, the agreement is very clear that the First Nations and the government will enter into negotiations for a further strategy in terms of what may be needed or what may be done in future. That negotiation must be completed before the end of March, and I hope he is well aware of that. We are very pleased to be able to proceed with discussions with First Nations.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Minister, you don't understand what that means. Those particular programs need to know that they have the dollars now so that they can do their planning into the next fiscal year. They have lease arrangements, they have all kinds of obligations that they have signed with various agencies, and if you delay the process until the end of March, it means those programs will shut down.

Len Wood and I were in Attawapiskat not more than two weeks ago. We were there and saw first-hand some of the work they do. For example, they have the crisis teams. As a result of the work through those initiatives, we have decreased suicides in those communities by significant numbers. How many children will have to die before you wake up and do the job that you're charged to do?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, I really wish he would listen to what I said. We are well aware that there is an answer that needs to be given before the end of December. We also have completed the evaluation. The evaluation indicates it's a very positive program. As I said, I see no reason why there will not be a positive answer. The process that goes on from January to March, though, is a very important process for negotiation with First Nations, because we think there might well be improvements and enhancements that we will be able to make in co-operation with First Nations in this particular strategy.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'd like to direct my question to the Attorney General, and it concerns his announcement a few weeks ago regarding the Office for Victims of Crime coming into being. I would

like to know what are the specific outreach activities and the composition of the new crime victims office. How do you see it working in terms of assisting Ontario crime victims?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I appreciate the question from the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, who I know is very committed to programs that serve victims of crime.

On November 19 it was my distinct honour to announce the creation of a new Office for Victims of Crime. The office is the first of its kind in Canada, and it will serve as a focal point within government for victims' concerns and activities. The office was suggested by crime victims and victims' organizations themselves. They have helped us create this office, and the level of their involvement is unprecedented. The level of consultations between people who have been directly affected by crime has been unprecedented, and those on the front lines have been very much a part of the creation of this office.

Sharon Rosenfeldt is the chair of the office and Scott Newark is special counsel in the office. They both have been at the forefront of advancing victims' issues and ensuring victims' services for many years, and under their guidance the office has assembled a team with unparalleled expertise.

Mr Hastings: My supplementary relates to recent statistics announced by the city of Toronto police about the still persistent high crime rate that we have in the city of Toronto, despite some critics' contentions that crime is going down. How do you see the new office for crime victims paralleling and complementing other crime prevention initiatives that this government has introduced in the past year and a half?

Hon Mr Harnick: Because we have increased the number of victims' services associated with the criminal justice system by such a significant extent over what previously existed, it is now very important that an office be created to coordinate the work that various offices, for instance, within the victim crisis assistance referral service and the victim/witness assistance program work. We want to make sure that the services being delivered by these offices are of the highest quality, that the services are comparable from office to office, and that people are receiving the access they need to the programs that are available.

The office will be working in conjunction with other ongoing efforts to improve the justice system, and one of those is undoubtedly the working group that we've set up to deal with the implementation of the May-Iles inquest recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mr Harnick: On completion of consultation that the victims' office is now taking across the province, we will have a blueprint to ensure the coordination of those services —

The Speaker: New question.

TUITION FEES

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. It's always fascinating when the Premier is in the House. Let me remind you of what he said yesterday: "If you can find a university or a college that is turning down a student who has academic qualifications for lack of money, I want you to bring that student to my attention. They are not allowed to do that and operate with public money in Ontario."

On October 28 I raised the case of Chris Chmelyk. Chris is an engineering student at Queen's University. You weren't very sympathetic back in October, but I thought it would be important to remind you of it. Chris doesn't qualify for OSAP because his parents' income is too high. His parents can only afford to send him \$200 a month. He has exhausted his lines of credit with the banks and in January he will have exhausted all of the university's emergency funding.

I wanted to ask you, in light of the Premier's comments yesterday, what are you going to do about Chris Chmelyk if he's unable to continue in January, and what actions are you going to take against Queen's University?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I think we all in this House know that whether under a Liberal government, an NDP government or the present Progressive Conservative government, there are criteria to be eligible for the Ontario student assistance program, and students with a family income above a certain level — for example, if your family income is \$100,000 a year, one would not expect the taxpayers to be contributing in terms of grants or loans in that kind of situation.

I say to the member for Oriole, I'm sure he would join me in terms of attempting to rectify the problem, whereby in 1995-96 the federal Liberal transfer payments to the province of Ontario were \$6.3 billion, whereas in 1998-99 those same transfer payments were under \$4 billion, a reduction of about \$2.5 billion.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon David Johnson: That money is going to health and to post-secondary education. If the member for Oriole would join me in approaching the federal government —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Caplan: It's interesting. The minister and the Premier have to get their stories straight. You can talk all you want and give non-answers, but that doesn't help Chris and students across this province. Let me remind you of what else the Premier said yesterday, and he was very clear: "If you want to get public money from this government and run a university or a community college in the province of Ontario, you must guarantee access, regardless of financial circumstances" — that's pretty categorical — "for every student who qualifies in the province of Ontario."

Let me ask you again, Minister: What are you going to do about Queen's University and Chris Chmelyk if Chris is unable to continue in January, not because of poor academic performance but because of your tuition

policies, because of your changes to OSAP, because of the debt burden that you are placing on students? He's accessed all the possible funding. So let me ask you again: In light of the Premier's comments, what are you going to do if Chris has to leave in January and what sanctions are you going to place against Queen's University?

Hon David Johnson: What we have done is put in place a series of supports for low-income students who need that support to ensure that no low-income student in the province of Ontario is denied access to post-secondary education because of lack of funds. We've done that by, for example, over the last three years increasing the amount of money, direct financial support, going to students through the Ontario student assistance program by \$134 million. It's interesting that this now brings the level of support we are giving to post-secondary students up to \$534 million.

What do you suppose it was when the Liberals were in office? Let's have a look. In 1990, the level of support was \$205 million, over \$300 million less.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES
LEGISLATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): In the absence of the Premier, this is a question for the Minister of Citizenship. Today is the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, and my question is about another outlandish remark made by your Premier last week. Last week in this House, your Premier tried to imply that the former member for York East, Mr Gary Malkowski, supports your empty Bill 83 and your government's sorry record in responding to the needs of people with disabilities. After Mr Malkowski heard the outlandish remarks by your Premier, he straightaway wrote him a letter. In his letter he says to the Premier: "Your statements could not be further from the truth. I think Bill 83 is useless, toothless and patronizing legislation. I have never supported Bill 83."

Minister, will you, on behalf of your Premier, retract last week's statement and will you apologize to Mr Malkowski?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): First of all, if you cared to read Hansard carefully, you would see that the Premier's comments in the House last week about former NDP MPP Gary Malkowski had to do with the government's program, the Ontario disability support plan. At a news conference in 1997, speaking for the Canadian Hearing Society, Mr Malkowski said about the launch of the ODSP: "I wish to congratulate you, Minister" — referring to the Minister of Community and Social Services — "for showing the most positive kind of announcement we've had in some time, including previous governments. I would also like to offer congratulations to Mike Harris for making a commitment, for introducing the Ontarians with disabilities legislation."

So your statement is totally false.

Interjections.

1520

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Ottawa-Rideau, could you go back to your seat, please.

Mr Hampton: This is incredible. Not only does this government think they can spend \$50 million in taxpayers' money —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. Member for Dufferin-Peel.

Mr Hampton: This is getting more outlandish all the time. Not only does this government think it can spend \$50 million —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Look, folks, he's going to get his question in, so you may as well let him do it. It's going to happen, so stop heckling.

Mr Hampton: I'll try again, Speaker, because I think we've caught the Premier in yet another very outlandish situation.

Not only do you think you can spend \$50 million of taxpayers' money trying to brainwash people, but you also think you can twist the words of Mr Malkowski. I've got Hansard. This is what the Premier said. After you introduced Bill 83 he said: "We have had more people with disabilities, including a former New Democratic member who came forward and said of the move that we made, 'This is the biggest breakthrough in the history of the Ontario Legislature.'"

Mr Malkowski said nothing like that. This is what he said:

"Your statements could not be further from the truth. I think Bill 83 is useless, toothless and patronizing legislation. I have never supported Bill 83."

Stop trying to put words in people's mouths. Apologize to Mr Malkowski. Stop trying to misrepresent his views. Will you do that?

Hon Ms Bassett: I want to point out I will not apologize because Mr Malkowski did give input and took part in our consultation process during the summer. I want to thank him for that. I must say, that's better than any member of the parties opposite bothered to do. If you were so interested in this issue, you could have come forward and —

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: Step outside and say that. Let's go. Come on.

Interjections.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Remember that course in law school on ethics, Howard?

The Speaker: Ottawa-Rideau, you're still not in your seat. If you don't — I've been warning you. Get back to your seat, please. Thank you.

New question, member for Eglinton.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr William Saunderson (Eglinton): My question can be answered inside the House. It's to the Minister of Community and Social Services. This government has

taken welcome and significant steps in the area of child protection reform. One of these steps was the introduction of amendments to the Child and Family Services Act, which are now proceeding through legislation. This morning I understand you were at the Children's Aid Society of Toronto. Could you tell this House about the purpose of your visit?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Yes, I'd be very pleased to do so. I was at the Children's Aid Society of Toronto this morning to announce that we are introducing our new funding framework for children's aid societies here in the province. It's a new framework that will provide fairer funding and more equitable funding across the province for children's aid societies and it also will better reflect the caseload that front-line workers are currently carrying.

Supported by the \$170 million in funding over the next three years we announced this year, this will mean that they will be hiring an additional 760 permanent front-line workers over the next three years. That's a staffing increase of 24% and that's in addition to the 220 new staff that were hired from last year's new investment into children's aid societies.

The framework will provide for more intensive training for both new and experienced staff. We're also increasing the minimum rates for foster parents by 85%.

Mr Saunderson: This is very exciting news for children in need of protection and for the children's aid societies. I know the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies has been calling for an equitable and rational approach to funding. I'm sure that this House would like to know if this new funding framework will achieve this objective.

Hon Mrs Ecker: As a matter of fact, the new framework actually does a number of things. As we mentioned, it is a more rational approach. It's something that the coroner's inquest and the task force on child mortality had recommended. This is also something the children's aid societies have lobbied for for quite some time. We'll be training children's aid societies in the next week or two for this new formula, because the money will be flowing this month to them. There will be \$20 million that goes this year, \$60 million in 1999, and \$90 million in the year 2000.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Ecker: In the meantime, the other important thing is that they still have access to the contingency funding. That's the emergency funding that is available if their caseload exceeds their base budget. That will be available to them during this transition process.

The honourable member from across the way who keeps saying "Is this indeed more money?" should check the 1995-96 budget, and she can check this year's budget, and she will find that this is a substantial and significant increase in new dollars for children's aid societies.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Last week, I asked you why your ministry was cancelling the support dollars for visiting specialists in northern communities. Today I want to bring to your attention the case of Keith McIntyre of Elliott Lake.

Mr McIntyre presented at the hospital emergency room with acute appendicitis. A surgeon was available but there was no anaesthesiologist available. Therefore, Mr McIntyre needed to travel to Sudbury for surgery. There was no ambulance available for the 170-kilometre trip to Sudbury. Mr McIntyre's senior-citizen father then drove his son to Sudbury.

Minister, do you think Mr McIntyre should have to rely on a senior-citizen father to drive to Sudbury — a distance, by the way, that is about the same as Toronto to London — in order to have an emergency operation?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As the member knows, our government is undertaking reform in this province so we can bring services in this province as close to the communities and the homes of individuals as possible.

That's why we have expanded the number of MRIs in this province from 12 to 35. That's why we have now opened 21 new dialysis centres. This week we opened two, one in Brockville and one in Cornwall. That is part of what this government is doing. We are responding to the specific needs of people in this province, throughout the province, to ensure that we can bring the services closer to home.

Mr Michael Brown: Again we got no answer from the minister regarding the service to northern patients.

Ten days ago, a patient at Manitoulin Health Centre, who was in hospital with an apparent heart attack at the Little Current facility of the Manitoulin Health Centre, was waiting to go to Sudbury Memorial Hospital to the cardiac care unit for treatment. He had been admitted five days before to the Manitoulin facility. Since this was the weekend, the ambulance wouldn't transfer him to the cardiac care unit in Sudbury. That meant the patient lost his place in the queue. They admitted another patient to the Sudbury Memorial Hospital. This patient didn't finally get to Sudbury until Tuesday.

We want to know what you're doing to help these specific patients in these specific circumstances. We don't need \$47 million worth of propaganda to tell us how good your health care is. We need to have the services available now.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would certainly agree with the member opposite. We are doing everything we can to ensure that the services can be provided here.

Even this last week we have again taken action to address the health needs of people in northern Ontario. We have introduced a new initiative with the Ontario Medical Association. These are the physicians in the province. We developed a plan jointly with them so we could provide more physician access in 20 northern communities. We increased the fees that physicians could earn in those communities. We are providing bonuses for those

physicians in providing obstetrics, emergency and anaesthesiology services. We are providing retention bonuses of \$10,000.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We are taking action to ensure that people in the north have access to the services they need, and this is just one more initiative that we have undertaken. We've also added —

The Speaker: New question.

1530

ABORIGINAL HEALING
AND WELLNESS STRATEGY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): My question is to the minister responsible for native issues. You would know that our government back in 1994 funded the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy. That agreement comes due this year. Earlier we asked a question of the Minister of Community and Social Services, who seemed to indicate that there's going to be an ongoing review until the month of March.

I want to be very clear, Minister, in the question to you. Is the minister prepared to put the dollars on the table and send a signal to the aboriginal communities of this province to let them know that this program will be renewed and do the work it was set out to do?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): For the third time, what the Minister of Community and Social Services said is that, number one, she expects there will be a positive answer insofar as the future of the program is concerned. She also advised you that because an evaluation of the program has taken place, between January and March there will be a review of the program to see what kind of improvements can be made to it.

That's why we have an evaluation. We don't have the evaluation so we can forget about how to make it better. The minister was very clear that during that period of time there will be discussions taking place to see how the program can be improved.

Mr Bisson: I had the opportunity to speak to both Grand Chief Fox, who you know quite well, and also Deputy Grand Chief James Morris. They've told me that in meetings with the Premier and meetings with the then minister, your government was going to renew the funding for this program. They are now getting signals from your ministry that the review will cause a delay and, at the worst, the review will mean there will be program changes in which they will lose money to programs such as the program that's utilized in crisis intervention.

You know as well as I do how important those programs are. I want assurances in the House today, that you say to these individuals and these groups that the dollars will be in place for the programs that were set out initially and you don't have to go through a review because you've already done it.

Hon Mr Harnick: I'm giving you that assurance again. The minister has stated that there will be a positive

response to the continuation of the program. The minister also said that because there has been an evaluation of the program, the program has an opportunity to be improved. Certainly that's the intention of the government. I don't know what more we can tell you, until you're going to take yes for an answer.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my privilege to have an opportunity to ask a question of the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. But first, Minister, I want to thank you for visiting my riding of Durham East recently during the salute to small business. I really appreciate that. It's very personal. The efforts you made mean a lot to my constituents and certainly to all ridings in Ontario that I know you visited during that important week.

Minister, you listened and spoke with the employees at a small business in Bowmanville called Durham Precision Cabinets. I heard you remark on a couple of occasions the importance of exporting for small business, the growth opportunities. Could you explain for the House today and share with us what your intention is and what exactly you are trying to convince small business to get involved in exporting with.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'd like to thank the honourable member for Durham East for the question and also for his participation in visiting businesses in his riding during the salute to small business.

Trade is extremely important to Ontarians. Ontario international goods and services support over 1.5 million jobs in this province. For every \$100,000 of Ontario exports, one new job is created for an Ontarian. More trade means more jobs.

Our government is committed to creating an environment where small business can grow and compete successfully in a global marketplace. That's one of the reasons we set up the Minister's Export Marketing Task Force under the direction of our colleague Bill Saunderson, the member for Eglinton, to look at ways we can encourage more small businesses to get involved in exporting, because, as I've said many times, more exports mean more jobs for Ontarians.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for those remarks, Minister, because clearly you are the champion or leader of creating jobs in this province. I commend you for the hard work and leadership, and if I had more time I'd go into that.

I was reading just recently in Canadian Business magazine that Ontario is accepting nominations for the Ontario Global Traders Award. Minister, can you tell members of this House today how they can tell their constituents, the small business people, to put their names forward for that award?

Hon Mr Palladini: The Ontario Global Traders Award is Ontario's first-ever program for recognizing export achievement for small and medium-sized enterprises. It was one of the recommendations that was

put forward by the Minister's Export Marketing Task Force. We have partnered with the private sector in creating and delivering this particular program.

Companies such as the Bank of Montreal, Canadian Business Data, the Export Development Corp, Canadian Airlines, and Deloitte and Touche have also donated their time and money to ensure that exporters are properly recognized and rewarded.

The objective of these awards is to raise awareness of the importance of exporting for Ontario's economy, to highlight the work of successful companies that non-exporting companies can learn from, and finally, encourage a stronger exporting network.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mr Palladini: Should members of this House like to nominate eligible companies or find out more about this particular program, all they have to do —

The Speaker: New question.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. This government has not responded to the specific and serious concerns that the disabled community has raised about what you call the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Will you commit to meeting with the ODA committee next week to address these issues?

Last year, the Supreme Court of Canada issued a unanimous decision in the Eldridge case that said all governments have an obligation to provide sign-language interpreters for the deaf who use the health care system. This is one aspect of what an effective ODA would address. When and how is your government going to fulfill this obligation?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): With regard to the Eldridge case, I can tell you that my colleague the Minister of Health will ensure that the charter of rights of deaf patients to effective communication with their health care providers is being considered and will be fulfilled. As part of its commitment to complying with the Eldridge decision, the Ministry of Health is currently consulting with deaf consumers, advocates and service providers on the province's existing interpreter service.

Mr Gilles Morin: Minister, the question I asked was, are you going to meet with the committee next week? Can you answer that? That's a very simple question.

Hon Ms Bassett: I have met with the ODA committee 10 times over the summer. I will be continuing to meet with them. I value their input. I can't promise that I will be meeting with them next week, but in the near future, I'm sure.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I have the

weekly business statement that I would like to read at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Go ahead.

Hon Mr Sterling: On the afternoon of Monday, December 7, we will be dealing with Bill 82, the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act. In the evening we'll have the House calendar motion.

On Tuesday afternoon we will have concurrences; in the evening, Bill 72, which is the Intercountry Adoption Act, and Bill 76, the Social Work and Social Service Work Act, for second reading.

On Wednesday afternoon we'll be dealing with Bill 81, the Tax Credits and Revenue Protection Act, and in the evening we will not be sitting.

On Thursday morning we have ballot item 37, Madam Speaker, in your name, and ballot item 38, in Mr Martiniuk's name. In the afternoon we will be dealing with Bill 73, and we will make clear our intentions about the evening next Thursday as soon as possible.

1540

Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to revert to motions. I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice with respect to Bill 56, An Act to establish the Greater Toronto Services Board and the Greater Toronto Transit Authority and to amend the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority Act.

The Acting Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed.

MOTIONS

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding the dates provided in the order of the House dated December 2, 1998, for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 56, the standing committee on general government shall instead be authorized to meet for the purposes of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 56 on Tuesday, December 8, 1998, from 3:30 pm to 6 pm, and on Wednesday, December 9, 1998, following routine proceedings until the completion of clause-by-clause consideration;

That at 4:30 pm on Wednesday, December 9, 1998, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and that the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto; and

That all other provisions of the order of December 2, 1998, stand.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PETITIONS

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition.

This petition is signed by some 6,000 people in the city of St Catharines and surrounding area. It's in support of the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, oppose the proposed closure of Niagara's only denominational hospital and the devastating effects that proposal will have on patients and potential patients from across the region.

"We ask that the Health Services Restructuring Commission reassess its recommendations for the Niagara region and ensure quality, accessibility and affordability through a continued role for the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

ABORIGINAL HEALING AND WELLNESS STRATEGY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here a petition signed by the chiefs of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, who just recently were in Timmins for one of their assemblies. It reads as follows:

"The community members and chiefs and council of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation territory petition the provincial government of Ontario to commit funding for the continuation of the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy, AHWS, into phase 2.

"Phase 1 of the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy has enabled many of the First Nations, aboriginal organizations and individuals to enhance skills and provide programming in many areas of health and healing.

"Phase 1 is coming to completion in March 1999. There is a need to continue the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy into phase 2 to build upon the program and service already established."

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition that was delivered to me today here at the Legislative Assembly by a constituent and it reads as follows:

"Whereas 138 schools across Toronto are candidates for closing, due to changes in the provincial funding formula;

"We, the community of Chine Drive public school, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure funding is available to prevent the closing of schools.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows."

There are 28 names on this petition, bringing it to a total of 381 from Chine Drive school. I have affixed my name to this petition.

SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : J'ai ici une pétition qui m'est parvenue de M. Roger Laporte, favorisant les caméras aux feux rouges de circulation.

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que les caméras aux feux rouges peuvent contribuer à diminuer de manière importante le nombre de blessures et de décès occasionnés par des personnes qui grillent des feux rouges ;

«Attendu que les caméras aux feux rouges prennent uniquement une photographie de la plaque d'immatriculation, atténuant ainsi les inquiétudes concernant le respect de la vie privée ;

«Attendu que tous les revenus provenant des amendes pour ces infractions peuvent facilement être déposés dans un fonds qui servira à améliorer la sécurité aux intersections à haut risque de collision ;

«Attendu que l'on méprise de plus en plus les lois sur la circulation routière et que cela cause des blessures graves aux piétons, aux cyclistes, aux automobilistes et, tout particulièrement, aux enfants et personnes âgées ;

«Attendu que le gouvernement provincial a endossé l'usage de caméras similaires pour recueillir les péages sur l'autoroute 407 ; et

«Attendu que les maires et les citoyens préoccupés par cette situation en Ontario ont demandé l'autorisation d'utiliser des caméras aux feux rouges à cause de ressources policières limitées ;

«Nous, soussignés, présentons la pétition suivante à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Que le gouvernement de l'Ontario appuie l'installation de caméras aux feux rouges aux intersections à haut risque de collision pour identifier et poursuivre les automobilistes qui grillent les feux rouges.»

J'y ajoute ma signature.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are the residents covered by the tri-county Lambton-Kent-Essex; and

"Whereas we are the taxpayers covered under the Health Services Restructuring Commission, Lambton hospitals; and

"Whereas we are the health care providers and users;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reinstate all complex continuing care beds and transitional care beds and funding slated to be removed under the Lambton hospitals restructuring program."

I am proud to affix my signature.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario, which reads:

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas 30% of bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas over 70% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of the bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

I support the petition and affix my signature.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a very important petition here that deals with prostate cancer. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

"Whereas prostate cancer is the fourth-leading cause of fatal cancer in Ontario; and

"Whereas prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of fatal cancer for males; and

"Whereas early detection is one of the best tools for being victorious in our battle against cancer; and

"Whereas the early detection blood test known as PSA, which is prostate-specific antigen, is one of the most effective tests at diagnosing early prostate cancer;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to encourage the Ministry of Health to have this test added to the list of services covered by OHIP and that this be done immediately in order for us to save lives and to beat prostate cancer."

I agree with the petition. I've signed it, and I would like to file it with the assembly.

ABORIGINAL HEALING
AND WELLNESS STRATEGY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here a petition that was signed by a number of people who have been in contact with the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centre and it reads as follows:

"To Premier Mike Harris:

"Please fund the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, phase 2. We need our crisis teams."

This is signed by a number of people who have been positively affected by the work done by the crisis teams

and I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of those who signed it.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of Minister Leach, who of course is not able to, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, pursuant to standing order 38(b). This petition relates to the importance of heritage issues and it concludes with the comment:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide stronger support to Ontario's heritage institutions and organizations and to work with the people of Ontario to establish a new Heritage Act."

This is presented by the Governor Simcoe branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris has announced its intention of dumping the financing for ambulances, social housing and public health care services on to the backs of municipalities; and

"Whereas this irresponsible action will create a shortfall of more than \$18 million for local governments in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Whereas local representatives in St Catharines and the Niagara region will be forced to either raise property taxes by as much as \$200 per household or cut services or both; and

"Whereas Mike Harris called municipal representatives 'whiners' when they tried to explain to him that his proposal was unfair and would create gaps in important services such as the delivery of public health care; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing accused local representatives of being opportunistic simply because they attempted to point out that the Mike Harris proposal was unfair and primarily designed to fund his ill-advised tax scheme; and

"Whereas the Harris government refused to listen to the representatives who work most closely with their constituents, those being the municipal representatives;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris government to scrap its downloading plan, which will cause either an increase in property taxes or an unacceptable cut to important local services or both."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by hundreds of individuals.

"Whereas we are the residents covered by the Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin District Health Council; and

"Whereas we are the taxpayers covered under the Health Services Restructuring Commission, Waterloo region health services restructuring report; and

"Whereas we are the health care providers and users;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reinstate all acute care beds and funding slated to be removed under the Waterloo region health services restructuring preliminary report."

I am pleased to affix my signature.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 55 people.

"Whereas most Ontario residents do not have adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have petitions that read as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology; and

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in health care and requires more medical services and not fewer services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make

difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres; and

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a cut of \$40 million in funding for Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature to this petition as I am in complete agreement with it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I have several petitions signed by people in my riding that read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised in the Common Sense Revolution to maintain health care spending at no less than \$17.4 billion annually; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has exceeded that spending floor every year since being elected; and

"Whereas total health care spending for 1998-99 will be \$18.5 billion, the highest in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has achieved this despite cuts in transfer payments by the federal Liberal government of more than \$2.4 billion; and

"Whereas a recent survey by the Fraser Institute proves that health care waiting lists in Ontario are the shortest anywhere in Canada; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is placing a greater emphasis on community-based health services in order to better care for an aging population; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is eliminating waste and duplication in the health care sector and reinvesting every penny found into quality services; and

"Whereas this has resulted in reinvestments of over \$3 billion; and

"Whereas Niagara region seniors will benefit from the government's \$54-million investment to create 646 new long-term-care beds in the Niagara region alone; and

"Whereas \$75 million is being reinvested over the next two years to open hospital beds during peak demand periods in order to handle emergency patients; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has pledged \$24.3 million to dramatically expand breast cancer screening; and

"Whereas 140,000 additional low-income earners are eligible to receive help with their drug costs through the expansion of the Trillium drug plan; and

"Whereas over 520 prescription drugs have been added to the Ontario drug plan formulary, giving seniors and

others who rely on the ODB program a wider range of products to serve their health care needs;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed with fulfilling the commitments made in the Common Sense Revolution and continuing to pursue policies which will make Ontario the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family."

As I am in full agreement with this petition, I will affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREATER TORONTO SERVICES

BOARD ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LA

COMMISSION DES SERVICES

DU GRAND TORONTO

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 56, An Act to establish the Greater Toronto Services Board and the Greater Toronto Transit Authority and to amend the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority Act / Projet de loi 56, Loi visant à créer la Commission des services du grand Toronto et la Régie des Transports en commun du grand Toronto et à modifier la Loi sur la Régie des transports en commun de la région de Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 2, 1998, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Leach has moved second reading of Bill 56.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 2, it's ordered to the standing committee on general government. Agreed? Agreed.

FAIRNESS FOR PROPERTY

TAXPAYERS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LE TRAITEMENT

ÉQUITABLE DES CONTRIBUABLES

DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 79, An Act to amend the Assessment Act, Municipal Act, Assessment Review Board Act and Education Act in respect of property taxes / Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière, la Loi sur les municipalités, la Loi sur la Commission de révision de l'évaluation foncière et la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne l'impôt foncier.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 30, 1998, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Baird has moved second reading of Bill 79.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 30, 1998, this bill shall be ordered to the finance committee.

1600

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
AMENDMENT ACT
(CHILD WELFARE REFORM), 1998
LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE
ET À LA FAMILLE
(RÉFORME DU BIEN-ÊTRE
DE L'ENFANCE)

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 73, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act in order to better promote the best interests, protection and well being of children / Projet de loi 73, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille afin de mieux promouvoir l'intérêt véritable de l'enfant, sa protection et son bien-être.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Madam Speaker, may I have unanimous consent to defer our opening comments, as our critic is not in the House today?

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is there consent? Agreed.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you. I am very pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 73, because there has been a great interest across the province, certainly among those interested in child protection issues, in the revisions that the Minister of Community and Social Services has brought in. For a good long period of time, there has been a desire on the part of those working in child protection to see a review of the Child and Family Services Act to deal with some of the gaps and some of the concerns that have arisen over the number of years since this act became law.

It is quite customary for a Legislature to review very important legislation after it has been in place for a number of years, to ensure that it is having the effect it was meant to have. There has been a demand on the part of child protection workers for the last number of years that the Child and Family Services Act be looked at in relation to the problems which have arisen around protecting children in the province. It is sad indeed that the current flurry of change really came about because of a number of inquests that occurred on children who lost their lives and who according to the findings of those inquests were not well served, were not well protected by the legislation as it stands.

Of particular concern, of course, was the issue around how we capture the problem of neglect of children in child protection legislation — how we define "neglect," how we can actually ensure that those who are child protection officers have the tools they need to ensure that children

who are suffering from neglect, rather than active abuse, get some protection. This is a very difficult issue. As we know from looking at revisions of child protection legislation in other provinces, it is a very delicate matter to try to be sure that you have sufficient protection for children in an act but that you are not being unduly intrusive into the decisions made by parents who believe, whether they're correct or not, that they are acting in the best interests of their own child.

I think you will find that most people in Ontario, certainly those in our party, agree that it is time we examined the capacity of child protection officers to protect children who are being neglected, either in their families of origin or in any other custodial situation.

What we do have to be very sure about, however, is that we are not unduly trespassing on decisions that parents make. We know that one of the major criticisms of the current legislation was that the overriding philosophy behind the act was to prevent child protection workers from being unduly intrusive in the family. In fact, their instruction was to protect children but to be mindful of that prime command that they should do so in the least intrusive way.

Many of us have been concerned that that wording has been interpreted in a way that has prevented people from acting appropriately on behalf of children. I myself know that in many of the cases we have seen, that was the directive that prevented the children's aid society from taking very concerted action in cases where they were concerned about children. That need to balance the ability to protect children with the need to respect the integrity of the family in which that child may be is a very delicate balance.

I think that we have gone overboard in this province for a long time in favour of non-intrusiveness into the family, and as a result many children have suffered. Some have even lost their lives.

It is indeed time for us to look at how we take action on behalf of these children so that the prime directive is the best interests of the child. While we may see that within the context of not unduly intruding into families, where there is any conflict between intrusiveness and protection, protection must win out. I would caution all of us that it is important for us, as this pendulum swings from non-intrusiveness toward protectiveness of the child, that we not let it swing too far.

Before the Child and Family Services Act came into effect in this province, very often families experienced intrusive intervention from child protection officers, and it was as a result of society's repugnance around it that the pendulum swung when the Child and Family Services Act came into effect. If it has swung too far toward non-intrusiveness, and I believe it did, we must be very careful that in changing it we don't swing that pendulum too far the other way. It is very important that we work to achieve a balance, and I would say that if we go too far on the side of intrusiveness, we will find a reluctance of parents and the community to co-operate with child protection authorities, so I would urge us to look at that balance.

I think one of the most important ways in which we look at that balance is a series of extensive hearings on this bill. Yes, the Minister of Community and Social Services conducted an inquiry, had a task force that looked into these issues, but the general public in Ontario has a right to comment on this very important issue. We need to hear from those who have been wards of children's aid societies; we need to hear from those who were not made wards of children's aid societies, who in fact see children's aid societies as not having protected them; we need to hear from the families of origin and foster families; we need to hear from the child protection workers themselves. It's extremely important, if we are going to change this act, that we do so with thorough consultation with those who have been affected by it.

I believe that one of the things we will hear when we go out to hearings on this act is a huge disappointment on the part of people across Ontario who are concerned about child protection that the changes are minimal in the amendments that have been brought forward. Those of the members who sat on the social development committee with me as we looked at the private member's bill on the protection of children involved in prostitution will know that one of the biggest disappointments will be the government's failure to heed the task force recommendation that child protection go to the age of 18 rather than just 16.

I think it is a mistake for the minister to have cherry-picked among the recommendations from the task force and not to have looked at those recommendations as a whole. I think we will get good advice, which may encourage the Minister of Community and Social Services to amend her act in a more appropriate way. That is certainly my hope.

1610

We know from inquest findings, from the very serious comments that have come forward from coroners, from pathologists, from coroner's inquest jurors, that it is extremely important for us to look at things that were left out of the original bill. One of those is the issue of evidence from past situations in terms of child protection. It was not possible in the previous act for child protection officers to bring forward past conduct, what in the courts is called "similar case conduct," in order to try and adduce the kind of proof that was needed to find the courts able to give protection to children.

This act is being very clear that there needs to be an improvement in that part of the bill, that we need to be able to look at the pattern of behaviour that may give rise to a pattern of abuse or a pattern of neglect; that it is relevant to a child protection hearing to know whether the adult involved as a caregiver has had a past relationship with child protection authorities and what that relationship was. I know that in the courts, when we have looked at issues of child abuse from a criminal perspective, when we've looked at issues of wife abuse from a criminal perspective, one of the major important pieces of evidence that gets brought forward is whether or not there is a pattern of behaviour that has happened in more than one

situation. That is something this bill enables to happen and is something we would definitely want to have in place.

Another part of the bill makes it important for us to report to the child protection authorities when we believe that a child is in need of protection. One of the things that has come forward is that teachers, doctors, ministers and many other professionals who deal with children have been reluctant to report because they didn't believe they had a sufficient level of proof. The act is trying to say that it's important to report on the basis that you have a reason to believe that the child may be in danger and in need of protection. Then, of course, it's up to the child protection authorities to determine whether that belief has the level of proof that's required to have them intervene. This reinforces the requirement of people who are in a professional relationship to children, who are doctors or teachers or early childhood educators or nurses, to report child abuse and neglect if they have reason to believe that it is happening, and to report it themselves.

I remember when I was Minister of Education and there arose a great debate: If a teacher had reason to believe that there was abuse of a child, many school boards required that teacher to report that to a principal, and then it went up a chain of command and very often never got reported at all. It is important that professionals report directly, that it be their responsibility. It is not good enough to delegate that responsibility either upward to your boss or superior officer or downward to a secretary or someone else, because it is based on the belief that the professional had.

It's going to be important in these public hearings to reinforce the fact that all of us are responsible for the protection of children. We must build a capacity and a willingness among people in our communities to take this duty very seriously, to create a culture in which we all share that responsibility, where we accept absolutely that it is important for every person who suspects child abuse and neglect to be part of the system that protects that child. Very often that culture has not been there. It has been a real problem in communities where those who report then get castigated for having reported it. They become outcasts in their own communities because they have dared to speak the truth.

The whole problem with abuse, whether it's abuse of children, whether it's abuse of women, is silence. One of the things we must do if we're going to change our approach to protection is to change our belief that what happens in the family is not the business of the rest of us as the community, because it isn't the case.

It is always our business, because the damage that occurs to children in abusive or neglectful situations is damage that follows that person all their lives, in many cases. They require a lot of support and intervention to be a productive and contributing citizen, in many cases. Therefore, we're all concerned because we all bear the cost of ensuring that people who have been abused and neglected as children do become productive members of our society, and we bear that cost as well as the pain when we do not intervene successfully.

One of the issues we all have, of course, is, are we going to have the resources to make this bill actually effective? We certainly have heard, over the months of this task force, from those who are on the front lines that even with the current bill, children's aid societies do not have the resources they need to be effective in their efforts to protect children.

I know that in my own community, year after year the children's aid society has had to drop one program or another. Those protective programs, those preventive programs, are not mandated programs. Very frequently, children's aid societies are able to work with parents in their own homes and help them to be more effective and appropriate parents, but it takes resources to put into those homes and to help those parents adopt an appropriate parental role.

Those kinds of support programs are not mandated and they need to be provided. But children's aid society after children's aid society, facing a financial crunch, have pared down their programs just to the mandatory programs that they are required to provide. Unfortunately, the preventive-supportive programs are not among those mandatory programs. As a result, more and more children are coming into care, and yet the children's aid societies find themselves without sufficient foster parents to deal appropriately with these children to ensure that the children are safe in foster care.

In my own community, in fact in the bulk of southwestern Ontario, in recent days there have been reports about the desperate efforts of children's aid societies to get more and more foster parents available to look after children, yet they have not been able to attract those foster parents. Part of it is because, of course, the daily stipend for doing that is so low that people will not take on these very often troubled children who are in need of very intensive parental care.

It may well be that the funding formula that the minister announced — not here to this Legislature, but announced somewhere else today — may ease some of these fears, but that makes it that much more important for us to go out to the communities with lengthy hearings so we can see and hear from individual children's aid societies how they would fare under this new funding formula, because if the resources are not there, the strengthened act will mean nothing. If the resources are not there to permit children's aid societies to ensure that they have appropriate placements, safe placements for children, we are going to see what we used to see in this province: children incarcerated in institutions, supposedly to protect them, supposedly to give them a better quality of life, only to find that in those institutional settings those children were abused even more.

We don't want to go back to those days. What we want to be able to do in strengthening this act is make sure that if children are brought under the protection of Ontario, they will not find themselves further jeopardized in care; that they will find it is truly a protective placement and not one which leads to even greater abuse and neglect, as has

sometimes been the problem in the past. This is an act that we are anxious to see discussed in committee.

1620

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John L. Parker (York East): The member for London Centre spoke eloquently, as she always does, this time on the subject of Bill 73, the amending act to the Child and Family Services Act.

The member points out some of the respects in which the current act has failed children in this province and the need to amend the act so that it responds better to the needs of children in this province.

The member points out that the existing act, in its wording, in its structure, has had the effect of discouraging some care workers to intervene in cases where obviously intervention has been and was required. There are a number of coroner's inquests to testify to that very unfortunate situation.

The member spoke quite eloquently on that issue and, as a result of that issue, the need to make amendments to the Child and Family Services Act so that it more effectively addresses the needs of children who need the protection of the act. The member, I think, is optimistic that the amendments this bill brings to the act will in fact enhance protection of children in this province.

The member spoke, to some degree, on the matter of funding for the services to be provided under the act. I will have more to say on that later. But the good news is that the funding, as a result of changes made by this government, will be more consistent and will be more responsive to the needs of children. That is good news for all of us.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I too would like to compliment the member for London Centre for her insightful presentation with respect to Bill 73. I find it kind of curious, listening to the member for York East just a few minutes ago proudly talking about the funding formula, why it's taken this government over three and a half years to realize that there wasn't money being spent within the children's aid societies. As a matter of fact, we can all remember that it wasn't too long ago when in actual fact \$17 million was taken out of the children's aid societies' budgets.

I can't think of a tougher job in society than being a worker with the CASS, particularly those workers who are involved in protection. At one time, when I used to practice a fair amount of family law and juvenile law back some 15, 20 years ago, I dealt with the children's aid society in Kingston quite frequently. I was always amazed at the kind of work ethic and the difficult situation that the child protection workers were involved in with the children's aid society.

These are usually people who basically aren't wanted in the situations they encounter. They normally aren't wanted, certainly by the families they're investigating, and quite often even the children, particularly if they're of a younger age or of teenage years, also don't want to deal with these workers. A lot of the time they're involved in situations where we, as a society, feel that the children

need to be protected, but on the other, these hard-working individuals aren't wanted by any of the people they're dealing with from time to time. All the support we can give them is extremely useful and needed by them.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I'd like to congratulate the member for London Centre in regard to the comments she made on this act. The member, as always, has done her homework and has looked into this matter, but she also brings a very large amount of personal experience in dealing with these issues over a number of years, both as a former minister of the crown but also from working in the field and seeing at first hand how previous legislation impacts families and children and how it works, or doesn't work, in the system.

I just want to add two points to what she has said.

One thing I think we need to recognize is that the government made some decisions early on about funding cuts and that's had a negative impact on the ability of the children's aid societies to do their work. They initially withdraw a bunch of money out of the system, and because of that, it ended up falling into a bit of a crisis. The government then came back and, by reaction, put money back into the system after it had taken it out. The point I'm trying to make here is that you're not helping matters much by making these huge shifts inside the system, because if anything, it makes it more difficult for people to access services. Also, for those people working within the system, it's already a tough enough job as it is and they don't need a government doing things like this that doesn't understand the work they're going through.

The other thing I want to point out in this part as well is that we, as members of the Legislature, often deal with issues having to do with protection of children. I just want to report to the House that I have seen a fairly significant increase in people and families coming to my office who are trying to deal with the children's aid around questions of protection of children. I imagine there is a relationship between what we're seeing manifest itself by way of violence towards kids — it's caused by something and I think that something, in a lot of ways, is government policies, especially around welfare.

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I listened quite carefully to the member for London Centre when she spoke. I always find her comments very intriguing. She has a great deal of experience and knowledge to bring to debates in this House.

There are a couple of important things to note about this act. Of course, the ultimate objective of this act is to protect children, particularly children who are at risk of abuse and neglect. She makes a good point when she says that in the past the pendulum had swung quite a bit in the opposite way in trying to keep families together. That was the objective, keeping families together, and there wasn't enough attention paid to the abuse and neglect the child had received. I think she makes a good point, to make sure that the pendulum doesn't swing too far the other way and prevents families from staying together. I think we have to be very careful about that. No doubt, we will hear some of those comments through the committee hearings.

The ultimate goal and the ultimate objective here is to protect children, and I think it's a step forward. It's a step-by-step strategy to look at children, to look at the care that children receive and to ensure that children receive the care they need, when they need it, and ensure we get early intervention to identify and assess their needs as early as possible.

I thank the member for her comments.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: I thank all of the members: the member for York East, the member for Kingston and The Islands, the member for Cochrane South and the member for Hamilton West.

This is the kind of work that, when we have an opportunity to do it in this House, requires us to be thoughtful and careful in what we do. Although we may have different approaches many times, and some of us may be disappointed that some of the recommendations of the task force didn't find their way into this iteration of the act, I don't think there's a member in this House who doesn't take very seriously our obligations as legislators to respond to the serious allegations that the act has not worked in so many cases and has led to the suffering and death of many children.

I believe very strongly that as we go through the process of debating this act, of taking it out to our communities, we will hear very good advice from our communities as to how to even strengthen this act. We have to be sure that we are acting always in a way that is going to be defensible and is going to add to the quality of life for young people.

I know that in my own community, increasingly the children's aid society is becoming the de facto parent for children with disabilities and they are becoming the parent because of all the problems that parents face in trying to care for those children with disabilities. The reduction in social assistance and the inability to get medical help for those children is adding to that. We need to have that as part of our discussion.

1630

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Parker: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to contribute a few remarks on the subject of Bill 73, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act. Maybe there's no better way to summarize the effect of this bill and what it hopes to achieve than was put forward in the headline in the Hamilton Spectator on October 29, the day the bill came out. On that day the Hamilton Spectator used the headline "New Bill Puts Children First." That is really what this bill is all about.

The Child and Family Services Act is a bill that is intended to protect children and to serve the needs of children at risk. As the member for London Centre has pointed out, that act has proven to have numerous deficiencies throughout its content and those deficiencies have been at the heart of some tragic stories that have come to the attention of each of us in this chamber.

There have been six coroner's inquests recommending amendments to the Child and Family Services Act. Of

course not all of the tragedies have resulted in that degree of severity, not all of them have resulted in the need for coroner's inquests, but those inquests have certainly pointed out where there are deficiencies in the current act and where there are important areas for improvement.

It's not just the coroner's inquests that have brought forward recommendations. Hosts of caregivers in the field have been coming forward with recommendations for improvements to the act. The minister convened a task force, the Ontario Child Mortality Task Force, to pull together all of these recommendations and come forward with recommendations for improvements not only in the act but in other areas of government policy as well that touch on the issues relating to the act.

The bill in itself is not the government's entire response to the concerns that have been brought forward. It is not the entire response to the need for a change in the way these matters are dealt with. It is an important part of the response but it does not stand alone. It is backed up by a host of other steps the government has taken over the past several years to address the needs of our children and to address the deficiencies of past policies.

Maybe the most significant part of the bill is the very first section where it sets out in clear language the purpose of the Child and Family Services Act: "The paramount purpose of this act is to promote the best interests, protection and well-being of children." It makes it crystal clear that all the provisions of the act are to be understood in the context that the purpose of the act is to serve children. As the Hamilton Spectator put it, "New Bill Puts Children First." Lest there be any doubt on the part of anyone who is involved in the care of a child as to where the priority lies, that doubt is removed by the new purpose clause in the Child and Family Services Act, as implemented by Bill 73, if Bill 73 does pass this House: "The paramount purpose of this act is to promote the best interests, protection and well-being of children." The entire act is to be understood in that context.

Perhaps some reference to other commentators on this subject might not be amiss at this point. The Hamilton Spectator, commenting on the bill at the end of October, wrote as follows:

"At long last, the provincial government is taking concrete action to close some major gaps in Ontario's child safety net. A new bill..." — Bill 73, the one before us this afternoon — "will make it easier for authorities to rescue children at risk of abuse and neglect. That's an important breakthrough in protecting vulnerable youngsters, and it's critically needed when as many as 50,000 new cases of suspected harm to children are reported every year...."

"Social Services Minister Janet Ecker deserves applause for making the move in response to many recommendations from child care professionals and coroner's inquest juries. The bill, in general, is broadly worded — as it should be — to give authorities the necessary discretion to intervene on behalf of children when trouble first appears. Surely the safety of children must take precedence over the rights of parents and

guardians. If this legislation had been in place earlier, some tragic deaths of children might well have been prevented."

I think the Hamilton Spectator very clearly sets out the broad themes and thrust of Bill 73.

The member for London Centre points out the difficult balance between the need to protect the interests of children at risk and the need to respect the integrity of families and individuals in society. This bill makes a choice on that difficult balance. This bill makes the choice to put children first. That's the side of the issue where this bill lands firmly.

The Windsor Star commented on the bill when it first came out. It made the point that the bill will revamp existing legislation to ensure children's best interests are always put first. It summarizes some of the provisions in the bill:

"The bill would make it perfectly clear that the primary goal is the protection and welfare of the child. It will expand the grounds for taking a child into protection by explicitly including neglect as a ground and allowing intervention at a lower level of emotional or physical harm."

This has been an area of some vagueness in the past. At what point can a caregiving professional intervene to rescue a child who is suffering in this province? There are clear cases that don't require a great deal of interpretation. Where there is clear physical abuse, there never has been any doubt that intervention is indicated.

But not every case that presents itself is so clear-cut. In many cases, what we see is not necessarily physical abuse, but there are any number of other kinds of activity which are by their nature abusive. A pattern of behaviour can itself be abusive, and neglect. In certain circumstances, we can all imagine cases of children who haven't been hurt, haven't been physically assaulted, but the mere nature of the neglect to which they have been subjected is in itself terribly abusive. The amendments to the act make it clear that that is a case where intervention is warranted and required.

The bill will change confusing rules for reporting suspected abuse to encourage more and earlier notification of authorities. Again, sometimes when abuse is proven, it's too late to give the assistance that's required. All too often, professionals are aware that abuse is going on but they lack the evidence to give them confidence to move in and step into a situation where they might face a strong legal defence because they didn't have all their ducks in a row. But by the time they get their legal ducks in a row, it's too late to save the child who is the victim of the abuse.

The bill removes the ambiguity from those cases and permits cases where suspected abuse is enough to warrant intervention.

1640

Mrs Boyd: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you like me to check for a quorum?

Mrs Boyd: Yes, I would.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The chair recognizes the member for York East.

Mr Parker: When the member for London Centre is not delivering articulate speeches in this House, she seems to occupy her time by counting members. We're all grateful to her for that service.

The Windsor Star also points out that the bill will permit evidence of a parent's or caregiver's past conduct toward any child to be used in child protection court hearings. Again, that's a breakthrough, because so often that is evidence that is useful, from a common sense standpoint, to get a picture of exactly what's going on in one of these cases. But the rules of evidence are often very strict and sometimes prohibit courts from hearing evidence which, to any normal person, would be very useful to them in understanding what's going on. Well, this bill puts children first. Where the children are at risk, the benefit of the doubt goes to the child and past conduct is fair game in determining just exactly what is going in the care of that child.

The Toronto Star summarized the provisions quite nicely. I think it might be useful to review their summary in the article they ran late in October:

"The new measures:

"Would declare that the best interests of the child must be the main objective of child protection workers.

"Spell out for the first time 'a pattern of neglect' as grounds for children's aid to take children away from their families.

"Clarify vague wording and loose definitions of children at risk and lower the threshold for declaring when a child is at risk. What used to be 'substantial risk' of abuse will change to 'risk that the child is likely to be harmed.'" So no more quibbling over whether the risk is substantial or not. If the risk is established, the bill calls for a response to that risk.

The bill will "clarify the rules for professionals and the public, who must report suspected cases of child abuse to the authorities." So often, it's important that those suspicions be brought to the attention of the authorities so they can link up patterns that establish themselves and get a sense of the picture that is developing. It is now important that suspicions be reported, not necessarily acted on, but they must be reported so the authorities can develop a picture of just what is going on.

The bill will "make it easier for child protection workers to define the child as being at risk of 'emotional harm.'" As I said earlier, these aren't all easy cases. Not every case comes before the authorities with bruises or with broken limbs. There are other forms of abuse that can be every bit as devastating in the life of the child but don't show up with quite such clarity of evidence. Emotional harm is one of those fields. The bill makes it clear that emotional harm is an area deserving of response.

The bill will make use of a person's past behaviour towards any child, not just the child directly in their care, during child protection court proceedings. The previous rules were unclear and the admissibility of past treatment of children was often questioned. That ambiguity should be addressed by implementing the provisions in the bill that is before us this afternoon.

What as to funding for the services to be provided under the authority of this bill? In the budget last spring the finance minister announced \$170 million in new dollars over the next three years for children's aid societies, to hire more staff, to provide more training and to revitalize foster care.

The Minister of Community and Social Services today announced some of the benefits that will accrue from that funding. Children's aid societies in this province will get 760 more front-line staff under the new funding framework, as announced by the minister today. That's 760 new front-line staff operating under the authority of this act. That is in addition to the 220 new staff who were hired last year. It will provide new and existing staff with more than just the numbers, but a comprehensive program of intensive and thorough training in child protection, including a 12-week pre-work training program for new front-line workers so they are better prepared to serve in the role of protecting the children of this province.

The funding announced by the minister will increase minimum foster care rates by 85%. One of the problems we face is a lack of foster families who can look after the children in need. By increasing the funding that is available in that field, we expect that the children's aid societies will be able to recruit about 500 more foster families by the year 2001. Each one of those families will play an important role in providing safe homes for the children in need of protection.

Under the new regime there will be benchmarks that will allow children's aid societies to better predict their workload and their resource needs. One of the difficulties in the past, and one of the difficulties at present under the current regime, which will be revised in accordance with the announcements made by the minister today, was that funding for children's aid societies was provided locally and responded to local budget constraints. There was a lack of coordination across the province and a lack of consistency from community to community, as each children's aid society was funded largely with local dollars.

With funding provided 100% by the province and monitored centrally, there's an opportunity for all children's aid societies to share information, to compare records of need and to ensure that the dollars go where the need is. Patterns can be monitored so that the need can be anticipated year by year, so that the dollars are there before the need arises, so that there is an end to the pattern we've seen in the past where the needs are funded locally, with predictions made to the best ability the local agencies can put forward. Then, as the need proves to exceed the available dollars, emergency dollars are put in after the fact to compensate for services that were provided above what was budgeted for.

That has been the pattern in the past because of a lack of cohesiveness across the province, as individual societies in each municipality have had to operate on their own, to anticipate needs, to anticipate the appropriate budget, and all too often they have been unable to anticipate accurately what the needs would be, resulting in emergency funding coming in after the fact, after the dollars are already spent, in the hope that the funding ultimately will balance out at the end of the year. But in each of those cases, each local agency had to go out on a limb to provide services for which funding had not been made available because it hadn't been anticipated. With greater coordination across the province, there will be a greater opportunity to anticipate what the funding needs will be and to make sure the money is there in advance.

1650

The new funding framework and the \$170 million in additional funding are part of a comprehensive reform initiative that was launched by this government in response to recommendations from a large number of sources, including several coroners' inquests into the deaths of children involved with children's aid societies, and as I pointed out earlier, the Ontario Child Mortality Task Force, which pulled together many recommendations that have been received over the years.

Other steps that have been taken to improve the protection of children include the introduction of amendments to the Child and Family Services Act, as we are here discussing this afternoon; a common risk assessment system, which is now being implemented in all children's aid societies, so that, as I pointed out, there is greater consistency across the province in anticipating where the needs are and in making sure the dollars are there in advance of the need; and a substantial investment in early intervention and prevention programs.

Bill 73 is a keystone component of these reforms. There are numerous other reforms also included in the steps taken by the province, by the provincial government, but Bill 73, which opens up the Child and Family Services Act and makes certain vital enhancements to the degree to which that act is able to respond to the needs of children and to meet the needs of children, is a vital part of that reform program.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): I first of all comment on the member for York East's remarks. He certainly reads very well from the briefing notes that are provided by the minister. It's interesting what the member left out. The member left out that funding for children's aid societies in Ontario has been such that practically everyone has been in a deficit position. They've been so starved for funding that they haven't been able to live up to the mandate that the government and the public have believed was necessary. Now, at the 11th hour, the government comes along and says, "Well, we'll give you a little bit of funding, and it's going to all work out just fine."

It's very interesting that the Liberal party, under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, with our critic in this area, had a task force that went around the province dealing with children's issues, and we came up with a

comprehensive policy on dealing with children. It's called First Steps.

We believe that if a government were to implement this policy in its entirety, it would have incredibly beneficial results for society in general, because when you make the investment in children in those early years, you save so much money down the line. Not only that, but you are providing really the building blocks you need to take advantage of your health care systems, your education systems, your community and social service systems. If you do it properly at the beginning and have a good foundation, then you can build on that.

I am very pleased to see that many of the aspects of our report and of our policy have found their way into some of the government's thinking. I would say, for example, that we recommended full implementation of the Ontario Child Mortality Task Force recommendations and greater action on coroner's jury recommendations, certainly one of the aspects the member touched on.

Mrs Boyd: I'm pleased to comment on the member for York East's discussion of the bill. I would point out to people that he would have been completely lost in his discussion of the bill had he not had the minister's notes about the funding announcement that she made today but did not make in the House.

It is extremely important for everyone to be really aware that this bill was first called before the House on November 5. It has not been called since, until today, when the minister has finally announced the funding framework to cover the \$170 million that was announced in the budget some months ago.

It is very important that people be very clear that a discussion of the changes to the Child and Family Services Act without substantially improved funding would be a very different matter. We are pleased that the minister has finally announced the framework, and we'll be looking very carefully at the various elements of that to ensure that it fills the need that will be there to actually enforce this new act.

I would say, however, and my caution would be, that this act provides for much more intensive work and much more intensive staffing in terms of the Child and Family Services Act. We have heard complaints for years and years that the understaffing because of underfunding was causing a lack of effectiveness on the part of child protection workers, so it will be essential for us to monitor the actual spending of these announced dollars to ensure that the act as it is now is able to be enforced but these new requirements of child protection authorities can be met in an effective way, which they would not be able to do without a substantial infusion of dollars.

Mrs Ross: I just want to comment, because I couldn't resist. The member kept referring to the Hamilton Spectator, and for those of us who come from Hamilton — we consider it a tremendous community with so many good things happening in it — it's rare that we would ever quote the Hamilton Spectator, because it's such a negative paper, let alone read it. I commend him for finding something good in the Hamilton Spectator.

With respect to this act, I want to say that this is a good piece of legislation which advances the needs of children, and that's the important part of this act. I can't stress enough how important children are. We all know that. Most of us in this House have children, as a matter of fact, and they are our finest resource, so we need to do whatever we can to protect them.

This legislation really focuses on children, really focuses on ensuring that children's needs are protected above and beyond anything else, and the best interests of children are at heart in this legislation. I think it's important that the bill does encourage more and earlier reporting of suspected abuse. It takes out the word "believe" that was in the legislation before. Before, you had to believe that a child was being abused, but now if you even suspect that a child is being abused, it's important that you report it. That's an important part of this act, and it's amazing how one word can change the whole direction of what happens to children. I think that's very important.

This act goes a long way to addressing many of the recommendations that came out of the coroner's inquest. There were 253 recommendations and I believe 82% of them have been addressed in one way or another. I think it's really important, and it's a good piece of legislation. I commend the member for York East for supporting the bill.

Mr Gerretsen: I think it should be remembered, though, by the people of Ontario that yes, apparently a new funding announcement was made today, not in this Legislature where it should have been made but somewhere here in Metro Toronto, to the effect that there will be enough funding now to hire 220 more social workers in this province. I think what ought to be remembered is that it's the same government that caused the layoff of 156 social workers when they cut the funding to the CAS earlier, so that the net result of all this is that there are going to be about 60 or 70 more social workers available than there were before the funding cut took place, and that is across Ontario.

If there's one thing this government can be remembered for when you look at the totality of things, I think it's the fact that this government, right from the day it took office, attacked children. How did they attack children? They cut welfare in this province by 22%. Who is affected by the welfare cuts more than anyone else? It is children. Some 40% of the people who are affected by welfare in this province are children, so they attacked the children immediately, the moment they took office.

1700

Some people can say it was really the parents they cut off welfare. The children were affected, and that's the legacy of the Mike Harris government, that it has attacked the most vulnerable people in our society, starting with our children. That's the reality of the situation. Some 41% of the people who use the food banks here in Toronto are children. Those are just some of the statistics that we offer to you.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for York East has two minutes to respond.

Mr Parker: I thank the member for Oriole, the member for London Centre, the member for Hamilton West and the member for Kingston and The Islands for their comments.

I did find the comments from the members opposite quite instructive, because it turns out that all they care about over there is money. That seemed to be their biggest concern over there. If you're concerned about money, I've got some good news for you. This government is spending more on child protection than any government in the history of this province, so we have no apologies to make to the members opposite for the amount of dollars going into the system. It looks like the members opposite are only concerned about the number of dollars that are going into the system; that seems to be their prime concern, their prime focus. We don't see it quite that way.

If we see that the system is flawed to begin with, the solution to the problem isn't to put more dollars into a system that has flaws. The solution to the problem is to address the flaws and then direct the necessary funding to the system as it's been reformed. Make the corrections first, then let the money flow. The members opposite seem to think that if the system isn't working, just put more money into it. That seems to be the answer to all problems that we come across opposite. That's not the way we do it.

As far as the number of front-line workers is concerned, this government has added 980 new front-line workers. There are more front-line workers serving the interests of the children in this province now than ever before in the history of this province — more than under the Bob Rae government and more than under the Peterson government, more than ever before in the history of this province.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to seek your guidance on a matter that's of particular concern to me and I'd like your thoughts. Yesterday in the riding of High Park-Swansea there was a woman who celebrated her 98th birthday. Her name is Kathleen Shea. I wonder if you might tell me how I could express from this forum my very best wishes for her on that occasion.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order, but it is of extreme interest to not only the House here but a lot of those watching. Thanks very much, and our congratulations to her.

Further debate?

Mr Parker: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Not to trivialize the proceedings, but I think it is important to note our congratulations to Mrs Shea, but to express our condolences on the outcome of her son.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Thank you, Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and The Islands.

I am very pleased to be addressing, on behalf of my party and on behalf of my leader, Dalton McGuinty, our responses to the introduction of Bill 73.

I can tell you, first off, that it is a serious matter, and while birthdays are important, I think the timing of the introduction of that sort of thing in the House — probably a better time would have been appropriate because this is a very serious discussion. We're talking about the protection of children.

Firstly, I'd like to say that our party is very much looking forward to hearings on the bill. This is significant change in the area of law surrounding children. We are very anxious to hear from people in the field and we expect to be doing so through hearings. We don't have the details of that yet but we hope to have that opportunity and, as a party, we insist on the opportunity to have hearings on this bill.

Secondly, we think that there are other issues. This government has been accused of putting the blinders on when it comes to dealing with our children, and I do think this is one more of those days. In fact, today the minister took her show on the road and went to a children's aid in Toronto to make various announcements. As members of the House, we're getting used to a lot of announcements the government makes. The announcements don't mean anything to us any more. Announcements of funding mean nothing to us because ultimately we have to stay on and on this government to actually see money arrive months later after announcements were made. The announcements today are just more reannouncements of things that had happened before, announced once again in yet another press release. What we know is happening, especially for children's aids across Ontario, is that now many of them are facing deficits. We are curious to see what the announcement will do to the books of children's aids in Ontario.

We have lots of examples of the government's track record on announcements. All of a sudden the government found a crisis in hospital emergency rooms across Ontario, so the minister made all of these announcements of money especially for emergency funding. That was done months ago. The crisis in emergency rooms continued months and months later as we brought example after example back into the House of how emergency rooms were still overcrowded, how there's still a shortage of beds in hospitals, how we still had not resolved problems at the local level in hospitals, and we said, "But you said you had made an announcement."

All of a sudden the Premier dusted off his seat and off he went on his magic tour with his own film crew so that he could prepare his commercials for the election and took half of the Queen's Park press with him. When they arrived in London, they said: "Why did we travel all this way? This is not news." It was a cheque being presented for money that had been announced months ago, and that's the point: All of the announcements that are made are done time and time again to get the maximum press mileage out of your announcements, but we don't know when the money actually arrives.

We went to London. We went to the clinic where you deal with children with cancer. Again promises of funding had been made, and we had to stay on and on the government about kids with cancer and why we didn't have

enough oncologists working out of the London Health Sciences Centre. We had to stay on and on even though the Premier himself had announced that funding would be made available, but we had to chase it down until the money actually arrived at the door.

When we hear that the Minister of Community and Social Services has been out making announcements of funding again — listen — we're not reacting all that strongly because you do it all the time. The difference this time, we hope, is that the time frame between your announcement and when funding actually arrives is going to be a lot shorter. This is a very serious situation and it's been serious for some time.

The members opposite who have already spoken to this bill certainly read from briefing notes, but I hope that in their own ridings at minimum they're going to visit their local children's aid society. I hope they're going to visit local children's mental health agencies that work in partnership with children's aid and I hope they're hearing what these people on the front lines are telling them, that while the press release looks terrific, what's actually happening in the field, such as what's happening in my own community, is record numbers of children in CAS care.

This is happening before the new bill for child protection even passes in this House. There are many reasons why that's happening, but many of those reasons have to be laid at the feet of the provincial government for having put the blinders on and made changes to funding in the past, which is finally coming home to roost at the expense of our children. The worst part is that it's coming to roost at the feet of this government because those children who can least afford it are being affected; those who are vulnerable to begin with are being affected in many ways by government policy.

With the blinders on, no one is seeing that a change in the housing ministry has a significant impact on children. When we look now to families who do not have appropriate housing because the housing minister made changes to apartment availability in Ontario and in particular in large urban settings, that had a major impact on children. Had you followed the recommendations we made, that Dalton McGuinty put forward in First Steps, which came out months ago, had you listened to that — we have asked you specifically for a children's directive in the government, which would mean that every single policy that comes out of the Ontario government is vetted through somebody, a minister really for the child who says, "How will that policy change affect our children?" Had you had that kind of policy in place, the Minister of Housing, who abolished rent control in an area like Toronto which has a massive impact, would know immediately that this is not going to serve our children well. While people are being moved off social assistance, they still have a need to find affordable housing, and in this city of Toronto it doesn't exist.

1710

The housing minister would have had to vet that policy through a child ministry, not the one that exists today,

which unfortunately is there for show only. We have a minister, called "minister responsible for children," who refuses to answer questions in the House that are clearly within the purview of that ministry, who will not even stand up and answer questions about children, still pulling a cabinet salary, still a member of the cabinet and will not answer questions in this House. The position is nothing but show. We insist on a real minister for children who would see the changes in community and social services. Whether they be changes to OSAP and how single mothers apply for loans to continue education and how that has impacted on their children, whether that's the Ministry of Housing and the changes to rent control and how that affects children who live in families that need affordable housing, those kinds of policies would not have come through as they have.

We are looking forward to the hearings on the new law to protect children in Ontario. We've been waiting for a long time. The most remarkable change happened in the late 1980s under a Liberal government, and I'm almost certain it passed with unanimity in the House because everyone recognized the need. At that time, the focus was on keeping a family united, but a significant part of that was that the legislation needed to be reviewed on a periodic basis, that over a period of time you'd need to continually review the legislation. That didn't happen. Unfortunately, since that time we have not had a government whose priority was children to ensure that it would continually be reviewed. Let's be clear: This government was not elected because its priority is children. That is not what this gang went out on the hustings for during the last campaign.

I think it is incumbent on the government to say that we as a group thank someone like Lyn McLeod, who for the first time introduced a critic's area specifically to shadow children's issues. Some of you in government have never been in opposition, but at minimum, if you ever are, and I hope that might be soon, you will then appreciate the role of critic in opposition, but in particular when you're meant to shadow children's issues. It brings a focus to an area where, had we not had that opportunity, I believe it would never come into discussion in this House.

We have to thank Dalton McGuinty, because he said as his first statement after becoming the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, "My priority is children."

One of the first policy pieces that the Ontario Liberal Party came out with was First Steps. The first tour that Dalton McGuinty made in Ontario was about children. In the back of our First Steps policy piece you'll see quite an extensive list of community groups and agencies that we met with in various parts of Ontario. In all sincerity, all of this was made available, even to members opposite, and I know that you agree with many of the items that are in First Steps. As a matter of fact, we're pleased because Dalton McGuinty continued to bring those issues forward as lead questions here in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: We can do without the prop, please. Please lay your article down when you're not using it.

Mrs Papatello: We also have to thank journalists today. For the first time in recent history, journalists who work for a whole variety of newspaper outlets have focused in their own communities here in Toronto on children. We have had very extensive and detailed research pieces done on what has happened to Ontario's children because of government legislation. Those journalists have talked about it for three and a half years. I think we all remember the series that was done in the Toronto Star. The Windsor Star also did an extensive piece on children. Every one of those for the most part followed the coroner's inquest, and that was over several months. So at least it's a tribute to those papers for taking the time and finally putting children on the front page.

We know that this government responds to what's on the front page of the newspaper. That's an unfortunate finding for this government but we know that up until the emergency rooms in Toronto hit the front page of the Toronto papers, this government was unwilling to respond with emergency funding, albeit that it would not be available for another seven to eight months. At minimum, we know that when it hits the front page of the newspaper, the government is responding. So we must thank the journalists across Ontario for continuing to put children on their front pages, because it has made a difference. It has made a difference in the House leaders' meeting; in actually making time to present Bill 73 in the House, making the legislative time in the calendar to bring this forward.

This information that's here was available in the minds of bureaucrats within the Ontario civil service for years. There are experts who work for the Ontario government. There are civil servants who are quite exceptional at their jobs, and they have been waiting for a government to have the political will to bring this forward. This particular minister, who wants to take credit for having done everything for children — I think we've got to take a good look at what we do as MPPs in this House.

First, the experts in the civil service are those who have the knowledge and the expertise to put the bill together. Second, we know that journalists and opposition have been instrumental in bringing children to light in such a way that the government must respond, because we know this government was not elected for children. It was the last thing that the government was elected for. You guys are about tax cuts. You told everybody that. You didn't tell people what that would cost us as a society. That became clear within your first year.

What was clear was that as the NDP made cuts across the board up to and including children's agencies — under a whole different set of economic circumstances, admittedly — we know that this government continued those cuts, again not looking at the impact on children. Now, a full three and a half years later, when the experts in your civil service within the bureaucracy of this Ontario government have known for some time that you needed to do a review of that legislation that came out in the late 1980s, as the legislation said, you did nothing about it for three and a half years.

For you to choose today as though you have done something, let's at least be up front about who has made you do it. I think those people out there in communities deserve credit for keeping this issue front and centre because you guys were not elected for children. Not one of you campaigned on that: for children. You're the tax guys, admittedly. But today, now we have —

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Did you campaign for children?

Mrs Pupatello: Yes, actually, as a matter of fact, I did. The Minister of Housing wants to know why I was elected. Actually, yes, I was elected for children. That's exactly what I said I would be following when I ran for this job. That's exactly what I said. I think we should be clear. If you want to caterwaul in the House, at minimum let's use the facts, and that goes for the members who have spoken as well, that almost none of the \$170 million that was announced will go out this year.

The children's aid societies across Ontario have been begging for a review of the funding formula, but today we have an announcement that finally it has happened, three and a half years after you were told that the formula is not working well. It takes you three and a half years to bring in something that you always knew you were to do? How many months after our First Steps policy came out have you finally come forward with changing that formula? It's absolutely in there.

If the Minister of Community and Social Services was actually adept at this job, she would have read cover to cover the First Steps policy piece that Dalton McGuinty forwarded months ago. We told you that children had to be a priority, we told you that when you made policy changes within various ministries, it would affect children negatively, and you didn't listen to us. We told you that there are more poor children today than the day you took office. In a time of economic boom it is children who continue to suffer, and that is what we have today.

1720

We're months before an election and, all of a sudden, you've found legislative time to bring in a bill that your bureaucrats have had for some time. We've all known that the issue was around the definition of neglect. We knew that the risk assessment tool, as a pilot project already working in Ontario over the last couple of years, has been effective.

Second, we have to tell you, if you already know that the assessment tool is in operation in Ontario today and already in those children's aids that are using it as a pilot project, the automatic effect is a greater increase in children intake.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): It's not a pilot project. It's in place because the government put it in place.

Mrs Pupatello: Speaker, could you kindly be fair in terms of the government members as well? I'd appreciate it.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like you to speak to me rather than to the other members. If you would address your remarks to the Chair, it will take out some of that.

Mrs Pupatello: I guess the most important part is that in the end, all of us want what is best for children. All of us want the bill to pass and all of us want it to have been done well.

We know it needs public hearings. Anyone who follows this issue will know that there will be changes that will enhance this bill, and we insist on having hearings. We know we can do that in a short space of time. We have been prepared for this for the last three and a half years. The likely thing to happen now is the government will try to pull some kind of a political stunt and say that we are trying to delay the bill. After we've been talking about this for three and a half years, at minimum you owe the public hearings on this and you owe the public the best bill you can possibly offer.

I would also say to those who are listening today who actually work for children in Ontario, whether it's through a children's mental health agency, if they work for the children's aid, if they work for the government in community and social services, to actually see first-hand the effects of changes of funding levels and policy and what it has meant to children.

I'd like to give you some good examples. When we talked about the record numbers of children in CAS care, what we know is that before the children actually get to the point where they're turned over to children's aid care, it's happened because there's been less support in the community than there has ever been in the history of Ontario.

We had a case only last week in Windsor and it was about a shooter who sought help. What was interesting about this case that I hope all of you heard of is that two days before this young boy allegedly shot an acquaintance in the face with a pellet rifle, this Windsor boy was denied psychological counselling because of a case backlog.

The parents said: "We knew something was going to happen. We could see it coming." The most frustrating part for the family was that when they contacted a local mental health agency, they said that despite a three-hour consultation, his request for assistance was denied. The agency could not help the boy because its resources are stretched too thinly. They said, "We are absolutely run off our feet and we can't deal with what we've got," adding that there are 68 other children on this list.

The story goes on about what happened with this particular child. In the Windsor area, the children's mental health agencies are stretched to the limit. By the time the children's aid gets the call, the child has already reached a very severe state.

This is the best example of a government that puts blinders on and doesn't understand that the children's aid, as that end service, should only be used when it's the end service and that all the way along in the continuum of this child becoming worse and worse and worse, the government had every opportunity to intervene before.

The government talks a great talk about prevention, it talks about the new healthy babies program and it talks about all of the new services that are going to be available. But if you talk to parents who need services, they are

finding themselves on a waiting list. Even for all of those favourites of the government there are waiting lists. Coupled with the waiting list specifically to the mental health agencies for children are significant cutbacks in the education system. When these children are identified in school because we haven't identified them before they reached school age, the children are in a regular classroom with a teacher, likely in a class today that is larger than the class was last year. Why? Because the government under another ministry, the Ministry of Education, took a billion dollars out of the system, and what they called fat and bureaucracy was actually the consultants who work for the board who deal in many ways with education for special kids.

We're talking about cuts that the government called fat and bureaucracy that actually was psychologists who were hired by the board, so that a school teacher would actually have someone within the board to call who is a psychologist. Those people are gone. That was in some little envelope in education that was deemed fat and bureaucracy.

Yet another example: In this new funding formula for schools, the government has a special envelope supposedly for special education and things. We found out later that the government wasn't giving the money, and that was only after the members in this House raised those issues, specifically about children being sent home because they didn't have aides any longer. Because they needed special attention and weren't receiving it, the children were being sent home. Why? Because the board never received the money from the government despite the announcement.

The members opposite have to understand that you have a legacy. You'll make any former or future government embarrassed to make announcements. Former governments pale by comparison in how you've managed to manipulate announcements that ultimately — I guess you must think that once the announcements are made, everyone forgets, but the money never arrives and suddenly the Minister of Education is scrambling to figure out, "Gee, I guess we never sent the money around for that special education envelope." You told the school boards they'd get X amount; you sent half. They actually had half the number of aides they needed in the classroom.

All of those cuts in the Ministry of Education are affecting the same pool of children. All of the cuts you made to children's mental health agencies affect these same children. All of the cuts that you have made since 1995 to children's aid societies, most of which are carrying some level of debt now, are affecting those same children. The children's aid needs those other agencies as partners. Once a child comes into care, they need help. Once the agency is identifying the children that are in need, they need to intervene. It's difficult to intervene when you get placed on a waiting list, and that in fact is what's happening — kids not getting help. That is the story in Ontario today.

Despite the good news that we finally see a bill here in the House that all of us have been pushing for, that all of us have been supportive of, that all of us will probably say, "I wish we could have gone further with this," all of

us know that when we get to committee and are doing hearings, we're going to find ways to make Bill 73, this child protection bill, even better because children deserve that. If there are any nuances to the bill you may discover you didn't intend, you're going to find a way to remove that through an amendment. That's what we're all looking for.

You cannot simply look at these particular children whom the CAS, the children's aids, deal with without looking at a whole spectrum of children's services, and this current government must take responsibility for the changes you've already made that have had a very negative impact.

We talked about the risk assessment tool earlier. We knew that once you could streamline, once you could better identify, once you allowed better training for those people who actually work in the front lines for better identification, with less risk in assessing those children, what ultimately would happen was more children coming into care. Therefore, you must have more services available. If we expect that we are going to do earlier identification of kids in need, so they never get into children's aid care, then those agencies that provide that prevention in advance must be there to do it.

1730

Sometimes you find better ways to treat children. Sometimes it takes resources to make that happen. We keep hearing about all these new workers who are going to be out there. The risk assessment tool takes hours and hours longer than it used to take, as to whether they admitted a child or not. Just the sheer volume and time it takes to enact this new risk assessment tool says that the worker is going to need more time per case. If the caseload is going up, if each case takes more time, you're going to have two things happen: You're going to have the caseloads going up excessively, as they are now, and you're going to have to have more workers. Seeing that we know Ontario has already lost 156 front-line workers, I challenge the government to say how long it will be before you get them on the streets, at least up to the levels they were at in 1995, because we know what's happening out there in the field.

The new announcements about all this changing of funding are long overdue and everyone acknowledges that. That's why we don't understand why it would take three and a half years of this government to discover what they learned the first day they were here in the House, and if they didn't learn it then, they learned it the first day that Dalton McGuinty was in here as leader in the House. What did he talk about? He talked about the children's aid funding formula.

After the inquests were over on all those children who died while in care, they talked about the coroner thing, because we are going back months and months. Those of us who followed it closely were saying, "What on earth took so long to finally get this bill in here?" I say again that it's merely a function of political will, and the most unfortunate part about it is that it takes journalists across Ontario to bring that will to bear, that it takes opposition

to continually bring these issues forward, which Dalton McGuinty has done.

Ultimately we want to see a speedy passage of this bill and we want to see it immediately after hearings on this bill. We know that this government will want to hear from experts in the field to confirm that the bill was done well. We also note that in the bill there is the opportunity to have an automatic review in five years, which is absolutely essential, and that's actually everything that is needed.

There are lots of parts in the bill that talk about changes in the justice system and what happens when children are in that system, about the kind of timelines that are going to be accumulated this time instead of looked at individually every time a child enters care. Those things are laudable, those are things we want, but there are also areas for us to consider, that when you make changes in law in one area, then we have to talk to the Attorney General's office. We also have to get him involved to say what is happening in the courts with our children, that in the beginning, when we start looking at case management of children in the courts, now it's starting to work, now we know the kind of funding that must follow so it is going to be the norm, not the exception. At the moment it's the exception in Ontario. It's finally beginning to happen and it has to be the norm.

Unfortunately, whether the members opposite understand it or not, it will take the resourcing to make it happen. You have to have the political will to find the money available, so that a Minister of Community and Social Services or a minister for the child will actually have the political power within the cabinet to make it happen, the same kind of power that in a heartbeat could spend \$47 million on political advertising that could easily have been spent in the area of housing, in the area of assistance for children, in the area of educational aides for those same children, in the area of children's mental health services for those same children, in the area of the court system for those same children.

You spent \$47 million in a heartbeat. You obviously found the political will to do that. But when it comes to children, it has taken a full three and a half years of constant prodding to make this happen. After all the years you have talked about the funding of children's aid, only now, after three and a half years, do we finally see it here in this House. Only now, after three and a half years, do we see the House leader making legislative time on the calendar to talk about this bill. At this point, we are expecting that it will be done well.

I am looking forward to those hearings. I am looking forward to speaking to the experts in the field so that we can get back in this House and pass this bill and enhance Bill 73, if that's what it will take. I know all of us in this House are looking for a law in Ontario that reflects what the general population thinks, and that is that every child deserves the best possible protection. That is what all of us should be striving for as we work to pass Bill 73.

Mr Gerretsen: I would like to start off by addressing a comment that was made by the Minister of Community and Social Services in a remark she threw across the floor

to the effect that we have smaller school sizes. I would just like her to explain to me why, in my particular case, the budget for the Limestone District School Board, which takes in the counties of Frontenac and Lennox and Addington as well as the city of Kingston, dropped from \$152.3 million to \$146.208 million, a drop of \$6 million — at least that's what the board thought they were going to get — when in fact there are more children in the system.

You can imagine the surprise the board got when the ministry figures came in. They said, "Oh, you're not going to get \$146 million to run your school system this year; it is only going to be \$143.9 million." So they had to find another \$2.2 million.

We all know that by far the largest cost in our education system, since it's very human-resource oriented — the teachers should be given a pat on the back rather than the kick in the head that this government has given them over the last two to three years — is the cost of the salaries we pay to teachers. How does she explain the fact that this school board is operating with \$10 million less this year yet has more children in the school system?

Hon Mr Leach: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know you allow a lot of latitude for members to broaden their comments on the bill, but when the member gets up and doesn't even start off by addressing the bill and starts to talk about education right off the bat, I think he should be reminded of the bill we're dealing with.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order. I'm listening carefully to the member and waiting for him to bring his remarks within the scope of Bill 73.

Mrs Boyd: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you check to see if we have a quorum?

The Deputy Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I've noticed that the last couple of times the government members have made those kinds of interventions when I've spoken on various issues, it is always on issues where I've got the facts right in my hands. Obviously they feel they cannot argue about it, so they say, "We don't want to listen to the member for Kingston and The Islands," or perhaps one of the other opposition members, "because they've got the facts and we don't want the people of Ontario to listen to the facts." Mr Speaker, the people of Ontario do want to know the facts, and what I've told you and them and the members of the government right now are the facts as they relate to the education system in the counties of Lennox and Addington.

1740

Let me address the bill. What the government members don't realize is that there is a very close connection between whatever we're doing for the best interests of the

children and the education system we have here in Ontario. If we allow you to run the system for another four to five years, the people of Ontario can look forward to a voucher system and the Americanization of our system. I'm telling you, the people of Ontario don't want that. You will find out from them next June or May, or whenever you call your election.

Hon Mrs Ecker: That's not what we're doing. Stop scaremongering.

Mr Gerretsen: That's called scaremongering? It's not scaremongering; it is the truth.

I find it very interesting that the changes that are introduced in this bill are very significant. I don't believe there has been a change in the principles under which children are to be taken into protection probably in the last 20 to 25 years in this province, probably not since my former colleague in Kingston, Mr Keith Norton, who is now the human rights commissioner for Ontario, a man I have great respect for, made some changes when Judge Thomson was involved back in the late 1970s. That's probably the last time there were some major changes to the Child and Family Services Act, or whatever the act was called at that time.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: The minister says that is right. I want to know, then, Minister, if that is right, why you are not allowing for public hearings on a bill like this. This bill has been here since October 24. We are now five weeks later; we're in second reading. In about another 10 days we're out of this place, hopefully. You want to give this bill, in the next two weeks, the next 10 days, second reading, committee time and third reading. Why is it that you never want to hear from the experts?

I hope Hansard got the response that the minister just gave me, when she acknowledged that this is a major change under which children's aid societies in this province will operate. I can't for the life of me understand, if it is such a major change, why they don't want to hear from the experts in the field.

What do you have against the public having good input into a piece of legislation like this? Of course, it's not the first time we've heard this, because they don't want any input with respect to Bill 79, which is going to committee on Monday for clause-by-clause determination without any further input from anybody, the experts. You don't want to hear it with respect to Bill 81, which is the Greater Toronto Services Board, another bill on which you invoked closure and basically said, "We no longer want to hear from the public on that bill." You are doing that with just about every piece of meaningful legislation in this province.

The only type of legislation they want to go to committee is legislation that is fairly innocuous, for which there is general consent among all parties. Then they say: "How much committee time do you want? Do you want a week? Do you want two weeks? Do you want three weeks?"

I want to know why the Minister of Community and Social Services, who always has so much to say in this House, particularly when nobody's asking her a question,

did not get together with the House leader on October 29, after the bill was given first reading, and say, "Let's have second reading on this bill in the first week of November. Let's have some committee hearings. Let's hear from the experts," back in the second and third week of November, when we were on constituency week and when we had a committee week here.

No, what this is really all about is it's a power play to bring in the most meaningful legislation at the last minute, knowing full well that the public can no longer have any input then, whether it's the property tax legislation, whether it's the greater Toronto servicing board or whether it's this kind of bill that affects the health and welfare of our children, that the government decides we no longer want to have public hearings.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): On a point of order, Speaker: I think it's very important that the House understands and certainly that the honourable member understands, it is not the greater Toronto servicing board, it is the Greater Toronto Services Board.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. When I'm standing and someone else is, someone else is out of order.

Mr Gerretsen: That's just the kind of meaningful interjection that we're accustomed to from the member for York-Mackenzie. I think the public and the other members in this House can judge those comments for themselves. Certainly I'm not going to comment on that, other than the fact that obviously the member doesn't want to hear the truth. That's all I can say to that.

There's another situation that has been brought forth in this House that also directly affects the best interests of children, which this bill talks about, and there have been a number of questions asked about this. That deals with the situation as it affects a disabled child in the Kingston area, the 11-year-old boy Harry Bellemare.

You may recall that Harry uses an electric wheelchair. He lost his teaching assistant. The reason he lost his teaching assistant is that Harry, who had an assistant all of last year, under the new provincial rules doesn't qualify for extra help because he doesn't have any academic or behavioural problems. He has some physical problems. You may recall, there were questions asked about that situation in this House, I believe of the same minister. No, it may have been the Minister of Education. Basically the answer was, "Well, we're doing something for Harry," or children in his situation, "and we're trying to look at it."

Nothing has happened yet. You know why nothing has happened? Because Harry falls through the cracks. He doesn't fall within that category whereby his educational needs are of a special nature as far as in-class instruction is concerned, and therefore he is not eligible for the kind of funding that used to be available. It is another classic case where this government, under the guise of making smaller government, in effect claws everything back for itself and wants to micromanage every situation from here inside Queen's Park.

Why wouldn't the government say, "OK, let's give the special needs funding to each and every board of education," as we have in the past, and let the local boards

of education, the professionals who work in the various offices, the boards of trustees that we have there, determine which children in their system should have the use of the various teaching assistants?

Wouldn't that make the most sense, Mr Speaker? I know that you're from a municipal background and I'm sure you would agree with me that when you were a municipal politician, like most other municipal politicians I know, you felt that you had a much better understanding of the needs of the people in your community, in whatever particular area we may be talking about, rather than the well-meaning bureaucrats here at Queen's Park. But oh no, this government has decided that it is going to micromanage the education system in its entirety and that is the way it's going to be, whether or not it makes any sense, whether or not a child in this particular situation would need a —

Mr Parker: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In this case, not only does the member not have the facts with him, he's not on the bill. He said earlier that we had difficulty, when he had the facts with him, whether he was on the bill or not. I can assure you, he is not on the bill —

The Deputy Speaker: That would be put in the order of half a point of order: the facts, no; the bill, yes. I'll mention it to the member that I would like him to confine his remarks to Bill 73.

1750

Mr Gerretsen: I find it very interesting that yesterday the member from Wentworth spent the whole evening berating his local council in Hamilton-Wentworth when we were talking about Bill 81, and in effect he was talking about Bill 79, and nobody said a thing, and now, for the third time while I've been giving my address tonight, the member somehow finds something objectionable about the fact that I'm talking about what is truly in the best interests of children: a good education system, a system in which the local boards of education determine which children and under what circumstances special teaching assistants ought to be employed and all the issues relating thereto.

If the members of the government don't want to hear that and if they want to get up on stupid interjections to basically cut off the opposition from speaking in this House, it falls right in line with the other non-democratic moves that they're making all along, such as not allowing any committee time, not allowing any hearing time in what the Minister of Community and Social Services here tonight acknowledged is one of the most major changes that has taken place as it relates to what's in the best interests of children in the last 20 years in the province of Ontario.

She agreed with me. She said it. I say to her, go back to your House leader and let's get some hearing time on this bill so we can hear from the experts. God knows, if we know one thing about this government, they sure don't get it right. Just look at the property tax legislation they've passed and have had to pass over seven or eight times before getting it right. We still don't know whether they've got it right or not. You need all the help you can get.

The tragedy about this whole situation is this, and let's see if they can argue with these facts. Did you know, Speaker, that 31% of boys and 21% of the girls in Ontario have suffered some form of physical abuse, that 12% of girls and 4.5% of boys in Ontario have suffered some sexual abuse in this province? Also, here in the city of Toronto one in three children lives in poverty, and we know that quite often the situations where children's aid societies get involved with families is very closely related to the state of poverty.

I once again ask the government members, what do you have against the children of this province? Why did you take out of your desire for a tax cut and your vengeance against the most vulnerable individuals in this province, namely, the elderly and the children of this province when you cut off the welfare rates in August 1995 by some 22%, when we know that over 40% of the people who are directly affected on welfare are children?

Over 500,000 children, half a million children in this province — we've got about 11 million people in this province, so about 5% or 6% of all the people in this province are children who live in poverty. I think that's a shame, an embarrassment, an indictment on this government and an indictment indirectly on all of us. I personally think that is totally unacceptable in a society that has as much as we have here in Ontario.

Why we aren't working together, hand in hand, to try to resolve these kinds of problems, I don't know. I, for one, know we'd certainly be willing to do it. I'd certainly be willing to do it. Instead, we see more and more children relying on food banks on an ongoing basis. That, to my way of thinking, is totally unacceptable.

The Ontario children's aid societies last year investigated approximately 47,000 reports of children's maltreatment. I found a very interesting statistic in some material that I was looking up the other day. I hope I can find it here. Yes. Did you know that the number of cases which were sent to the children's aid society in 1997 — I take it we don't have the actual figures for 1998 — was a 17% increase.

M. Bisson : Un point d'ordre, monsieur le Président : En regardant le Règlement de l'Assemblée législative, ça dit que la présence d'au moins 20 députés est nécessaire.

The Deputy Speaker: Just give me a minute to get my —

Mr Bisson: Roughly said, Mr Speaker, I believe it means we don't have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: If you're using French, I have to put this on. If you're using English, I don't.

Mr Gerretsen: He just spoke in English.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you like me to check for a quorum?

Mr Bisson: Yes, please.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung / Le Vice-Président fait entendre la sonnerie d'appel des députés.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 3 December 1998

Jeudi 3 décembre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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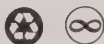
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 December 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 décembre 1998

The House met at 1831.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX CREDITS AND REVENUE PROTECTION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LES CRÉDITS D'IMPÔT ET LA PROTECTION DES RECETTES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 81, An Act to implement tax credits and revenue protection measures contained in the 1998 Budget, to make amendments to other statutes and to enact a new statute / *Projet de loi 81, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre des crédits d'impôt et des mesures de protection des recettes contenus dans le budget de 1998, à modifier d'autres lois et à en édicter une nouvelle loi.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was wondering if we might ask for unanimous consent of the House to invite members of the Liberal Party to this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): I don't know who is supposed to extend that invitation. However, now that I have the floor, I extend that invitation, and I'm pleased to see that the member for St Catharines has joined us this evening to hear my comments with respect to Bill 81, An Act to implement tax credits and revenue protection measures, another one of those bills that has a fine-sounding title but really has a whole lot more in it than may be expressed in the title.

We're talking a lot about tax credits. This government likes to follow that agenda that provides tax credits, a tax scheme for those who are the most well off in Ontario while sticking the bill to those who are the least able to afford it. I think this is a message that people are finally starting to understand. They know what the costs of this government's tax scheme are. They know that people who are working on Bay Street, who may be stockbrokers, for example — nothing against stockbrokers, but just an example of people who may be able to make up to \$200,000 a year — are going to get a tax break of over \$7,000.

That tax break doesn't come without any implications, without any ramifications, because people in the com-

munity I represent, Windsor-Riverside, see what that means for health care, for education and for other things like increased tuition fees.

We have gone through what most people, I would think, can only point to as a crisis in health care in our community. We have seen long lineups at the emergency wards at Hotel Dieu and Metropolitan General Hospital over the last couple of years. We have seen people who have been unable to be admitted to beds in the hospitals because there weren't any for them. People are being turned away at emergencies. Ambulances are having to be re-routed to other hospitals because they can't go to the hospital they were originally assigned to.

Although there is finally some progress being made as far as reconstruction of those emergency rooms at the hospitals in Windsor, we know that has come far too late to effectively address the critical crisis we've been facing in our community. Although it's all well and good to finally have the funds to replace the emergency rooms at the hospitals, we're still waiting for the announcement of long-term operating dollars for the hospital.

The Minister of Health was down in Windsor announcing just over \$80 million for capital construction in the Windsor area, but the people in my community recognize as well that bricks and mortar are not going to be enough to improve the situation with respect to health care in the Windsor community. We need a commitment with respect to operating dollars. We've been waiting months and months and months and we still haven't seen it. We're wondering what the holdup is. Why is the Minister of Health not coming to Windsor to make this announcement about long-term operating dollars? Could it be that she may be waiting for the election to be called? If that's what she's waiting for, I just say, call that election soon, because we need those operating dollars in Windsor.

One of the issues in health care that we've experienced recently is the possible closure of the Malden Park long-term-care hospital. That was a replacement for Riverview hospital. It was a promise that had been made by previous governments, but it was the NDP government that finally built that hospital. For many in our community, that was the fulfillment of a 20-year dream. It convinced many people to contribute millions of dollars for the construction of that project. It's for that reason that it would be so tragic for that hospital to close.

I think some of the steps this government has taken, some of the steps that are reflected in Bill 81 and other budget measures, are really leading us down that road where that hospital may close, because they are making

that into a long-term-care centre. It's not going to be a hospital any more.

This government's hospital closing commission has recommended that there be 446 new long-term-care beds in our community. It sounds good, but they've only announced 20 of them so far. The Harris government is privatizing health care in Ontario. They're not selling off hospitals. They say they're not closing hospitals, although we know that it's their hand-picked commission.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: The conversations going on are making it impossible for me to concentrate on the debater. Would you please carry them on somewhere else.

Mr Lessard: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm glad you have tried to get the members of the government to listen to what I have to say about what they're doing to health care in my community. I don't think I'm alone with respect to this either. I think there are a whole lot of other people who feel the same way I do about what this government's tax scheme is doing to the quality of health care in their communities.

As I was saying before I was interrupted, I believe this government is privatizing. They're moving us down the road to privatization of health care in Ontario. How are they doing that? They're moving services out of the hospitals and then they're starving those community-based services for funding that provides care for those people who had to leave the hospital. The only people who will be assured adequate nursing or home care services will be those who can afford to buy it, those who can pay for it, the ones who got the big bucks from that tax scheme. Those are the people who are going to be able to pay for it.

1840

They know that this government has downloaded public health and ambulance services on to municipalities, and downloaded child care services as well. They're creating a demand for home- and community-based health care services, starving those services for money, and they know that the Canada Health Act only protects services that are provided in hospitals. So when people aren't getting those services in hospitals, when they're getting them from agencies providing them possibly in their home, those services are no longer guaranteed. There's no guarantee with respect to the quality of those services, there's no guarantee that the prices are going to be controlled, and that is leading us to a two-tier, privatized health care system. That's what this government is heading for.

We need to take steps to ensure that doesn't happen. That's what my colleague Marion Boyd had been doing through her patients' bill of rights, so we have consistent quality, consistent access and consistent funding for health care services, no matter where it is that you may live in the province, whether it be in Windsor-Riverside or in Timmins or in downtown Toronto, for that matter. We should all have access to a consistent level of service.

If this government really wanted to make improvements to health care, they would address issues such as that. They would address the concerns we have for long-term

operating dollars in the Windsor health care system and they would also address the issue of treatment of children who have cancer.

I saw a couple of press releases earlier this week about children with cancer benefiting in eastern Ontario, children with cancer benefiting in Kingston, and I think I read one in another part of Ontario as well. I was looking around for the announcement that children with cancer in the Windsor area were going to benefit, but I didn't see that one. I can only assume that that announcement is coming soon.

We know that in the Windsor area children who have cancer are going to have to go to London to get services, to get treatment. That creates quite an expense to families, for transportation and for accommodation and due to loss of work time as well. We're hoping that these types of services are going to be provided in Windsor as well.

What these announcements in Kingston and eastern Ontario mean is that there are going to be additional staff people — physicians, nurses, a clinician, a social worker, a psychologist and support staff, people specially trained to deal with children with cancer. That makes a lot of sense, and it would make a lot of sense for these services to be provided in Windsor as well. I hope that the government, in making some of the budgetary announcements they've been making recently, will make an announcement for cancer services for children in the Windsor area. I encourage them to do that. I'm awaiting that announcement, and if there's anything I can do to be of assistance, I'd be more than happy to help out.

Something else the government could be doing is urging the federal government to do what they can to reduce the incidence of children who smoke, because we don't want to have to provide cancer treatment for young people or cancer treatment for older persons who got cancer because they started smoking when they were young. We need to take preventive measures, measures that will lead young people not to smoke and lead them away from that temptation.

I thought that Bill S-13, passed in the federal Senate, was a worthwhile undertaking. A Liberal Senator brought forward that bill to put a 50-cent levy on each package of cigarettes to go towards a foundation that would use the funds to prevent young people from ever considering smoking — a worthwhile initiative, I think you'd agreed, Speaker. But what happened earlier this week when the bill was introduced in the House of Commons? It was a Liberal doctor who introduced this measure in the House of Commons and it was another Liberal member who, on a point of order, killed the bill that could have done a great deal to reduce the incidence of young people beginning to smoke.

It's unfortunate that the federal Liberal government took that initiative. I would think they would agree that young people shouldn't smoke, shouldn't be encouraged to smoke. There must be some reason why they wouldn't want a bill like that to go forward. It might have something to do with the large multinational tobacco companies. It's a possibility. I'm only speculating. But when it

comes to issues like that, kids' health is far more important than the interests of the large multinational tobacco companies.

The issue of children's health in general should be more important than the interests of large multinational tobacco companies and should be of more interest than how much profit banks make, how much profit corporations make and, yes, how much people are going to get with their big tax break. Those who are the most well off would like to get a tax break, but that's going to come at some cost, and we're seeing what that cost is now.

I just noticed in the Toronto Star today that child poverty in Canada keeps getting worse while the federal government continues to talk about tackling the problem. That was the result of a survey from Campaign 2000 that came out earlier this week.

There's a trend that's going on, and this government is part of that trend, is encouraging that trend, a trend that shows that children are losing ground year after year. The federal government introduced the child tax benefit to try and address that issue. We've seen what has happened to parents of children who are on social assistance in the province of Ontario who, when this government first got elected, experienced a 21% cut in the funds they have available for shelter and for clothing and for food; and when the federal government brought in the child tax benefit, we saw that benefit clawed back by the provincial government. Those funds that could have been used to improve the quality of life for the poorest in the province of Ontario were clawed back by this government.

I can only ask, why is that? Is that only so this government, so desperate to fund the tax scheme, is able to find the funds to do that? If that's where they're going to get the funds to cover their tax scheme, then I don't want to be any part of it. I think most people in Ontario recognize that there is a cost to that tax scheme.

We're seeing it as well in another report that came from the Centre for Social Justice called *The Growing Gap*, a report on the growing inequality between the rich and the poor in Ontario. What we're seeing is that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer and the middle class is quickly disappearing.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Extinct.

Mr Lessard: It's becoming extinct, as my good colleague Mr Marchese says. I know he agrees that there is more pain than gain in the Harris tax scheme. Tax schemes come at a price, and we're seeing what that price is now.

We're seeing that the richest group of taxpayers got \$15,000 from this tax system and the poorest group of taxpayers got \$150. That's all they got. Somebody is getting whacked here. There are some people who are benefiting and some people who are getting whacked. These are the people who are the least able to afford that kind of tax scheme.

1850

Here are some of the things that *The Growing Gap* report recommended, some of their proposed solutions. They're not recommending the solutions we're seeing in

Bill 81, proposed by this government's budget. They're talking about better distribution of working time, high-quality, low-cost education and child care. We have seen this government move away from publicly funded child care spaces in Ontario, so that those who are inclined to go out and work and try to get themselves off social assistance are unable to do that because they do not have access to affordable, quality daycare.

They're also suggesting that there be employment equity legislation, that there should be a raise in the minimum wage level and that there should be a maximum wage. That's a novel concept we might want to debate here. We see the CEOs of large corporations making hundreds of times what is paid those who are the lowest paid. In other countries they have limits on how exorbitant the highest pay for CEOs is. That might be something we should look at and debate.

Those are just some of the suggestions from *The Growing Gap* report. I'm sure many of my colleagues will be raising some of the other interesting suggestions that come from that report. The bottom line is that as a result of budget bills like this one, the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer and the middle class is quickly becoming extinct as a result of the Tory tax scheme.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): The member for Windsor-Riverside was talking about revenue and taxes, and I think it's important to look at the total revenue that the province of Ontario was bringing in when the NDP were last in government. The actual revenue in fiscal year 1994-95 was \$46 billion. We began to reduce taxes in that next year and we've now reduced the provincial tax rate by 30%. We stuck to our fiscal plan extremely closely. Actually it's even brighter than it was when we created it. The plan for 1998-99 is \$53.4 billion in revenue, which is about \$6 billion higher.

The question that remains is, how do you cut taxes and bring in more revenue? We've tried to get this message out again and again: because more people are working. There are 440,000 more people who have jobs, and they're going out and buying homes and buying automobiles. When you buy a house, you buy carpet and curtains. The places that manufacture those goods hire more people. It creates a positive economic cycle.

Total tax revenue, just in case there's a question about tax revenue, in 1994-95 was \$34.5 billion. I can imagine the stark terror the NDP had the last year they were in office. They raised taxes and they got no new revenue. They must have sat around the cabinet table and realized they were totally bereft of ideas. They were a bankrupt government and they were bankrupting the province.

The plan this year for revenue is \$40.4 billion, which is about \$6 billion higher on tax revenue. By lowering taxes we've increased revenues. More people are working and more people are paying taxes. People have come to Ontario to invest. People who were staying home are going out to work. Investors who weren't investing are investing and the economy of the province is growing. The

middle class is growing. The working class is making more money.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): To the member from Windsor, they were good comments. He makes the point quite well that one thing we're noticing in this province is that the middle class, more and more since this government has come to power, is really getting it in the ear. I'll give you an example.

I was in Iroquois Falls on Tuesday. I walked into one particular establishment and there was an individual, M. Milljour, who's trying to do the best he can to contribute to the economy of Iroquois Falls and at the same time build a business for himself. I consider him middle class. He's a mill worker who's trying to invest and become a businessman himself, but he finds that every time he turns around, this Conservative government is picking his pocket.

He gets a tax increase from the municipal government. Why? Because a new assessment system has come out because of the downloading that has gone on to the municipalities. At every turn he finds that some way or other this government has affected him when it comes to his ability to sustain his income. This particular individual is not just an isolated incident. We're starting to find more and more of that by way of evidence that this government is eroding the middle class.

The government argues: "This tax scheme is making the whole economy of Ontario just buzz right along. That's really what it's all about." The problem is exactly that there is no evidence to display that. What's happening is that Ontario's economy is linked to the United States. The United States economy has been doing well and consequently the Ontario economy is doing well. Conversely, in the early 1990s the American economy was not doing well. What happened to the Ontario economy? The Ontario economy didn't do well.

I hope we don't see this. I hope the economy keeps on building and things go well. But once the economy starts to go the other way, and there's an indication we will end up in another recession, what will be the government's argument when they start to lose revenue as a result of what's happened in the economy? I think they might be singing a different tune.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It was interesting to hear the member for Windsor-Riverside talking about tax cuts and who was going to gain from these tax cuts and some of the problems that are going on.

I can understand the NDP and their philosophy. It's nice that they hold firm to their beliefs. You look at the Liberals and they keep moving back and forth and you're never just quite sure where the target is. At least with the NDP you know where they're coming from.

It's also refreshing to see the province of Quebec, for example, in this last election. The Liberal leader, Charest, a true Conservative, goes with a platform of tax cuts, but then Chrétien comes in and really makes a mess of things. Who grabs his platform but Bouchard? He has come in on a platform very much like the platform we had back in 1995 of tax cuts to stimulate the economy. He understands where it's coming from. He found out where Charest was

going and the big moves Charest was making, so Bouchard capitalized on it when Chrétien screwed up the whole campaign. Now we're seeing another province moving in the direction of tax cuts.

The NDP talks about, "Oh, sure, it's the US economy that's doing it all for Ontario," but have a look at BC, for example, the Canadian west coast. Things were booming out there when we were in recessionary times here. Why were we in recessionary times? Because we had an NDP government adding red tape and all kinds of taxes. They went into recession when we are doing well. Why? Increased taxes, increased red tape. They went into a recession long before the Asian crisis, so they can't blame it on the Asian crisis.

This indeed is a tremendous bill and I'll certainly be supporting it.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I just find the interpretation of the Quebec election results unbelievable. A lot of people wanted to jump on Jean Charest because he did not win the most seats in the election. I thought he made a courageous step when he went to Quebec City, when he took over the leadership of the federalist forces, the Liberal Party of Quebec. I think a lot of people resisted that temptation to blame Mr Charest for running a bad campaign or something. He didn't.

But here's the ultimate in partisan rhetoric over there. To start blaming somebody else —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I don't know. I just can't speak any further when you hear that kind of utter nonsense.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Windsor-Riverside has two minutes to respond.

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Mr Lessard: I want to thank the members for St Catharines, Northumberland, Cochrane South and Halton Centre, for their comments about my remarks on Bill 81. I don't know how the Quebec election got into the speech. I don't remember mentioning that, but it's interesting to hear the member for Northumberland's recounting of the history of the election. I can only be thankful that he's not the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. I don't know whether his diplomatic skills would come in handy.

The member for Cochrane South makes an interesting comment. He talks about, where is the evidence that this government's tax scheme has really improved Ontario's economy? I just don't buy it that that is the only reason the Ontario economy is doing well.

In my area in Windsor I see the auto sector doing well and that is strictly as a result of the American marketplace. I see the casino doing well and that's as a result of 80% of the clientele coming from the United States. That's what's driving our economy.

The problem is that in the next recession we have, as a result of the cuts that this government has made, we are going to be in such a squeeze here that we will not be able to recover as quickly and as well as we need to.

To the member for Halton Centre, who says that the tax cut has led to people being able to go out and buy a new

home, if only that were true. There are a lot of people who aren't able to buy a new home. The ones who are are buying another home so they can rent it to somebody who can't afford to buy one and then charge them exorbitant rents because of the Tenant Protection Act letting rents skyrocket. There is no protection whatsoever for tenants any more. I'd say further that the tax scheme is coming at the expense of borrowed money, money we're paying interest on.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm very pleased to join the debate with respect to Bill 81, the Tax Credits and Revenue Protection Act, 1998. It's time to get focused on what we're speaking about here in terms of the legislation, which hasn't happened up till now.

The bill means many things for Ontarians, and I'd just like to point that out. It's more tax cuts for Ontarians in small businesses to create jobs; it's assistance for and accessibility to child care for working families with children; greater access to capital for small businesses; it helps people with disabilities to get jobs; it's support for small growing firms for job creation in the new millennium; and it provides a fairer tax system when you're dealing with a number of areas with respect to tobacco and with respect to estates. Essentially what this bill does is what this government has been doing through its entire mandate: putting people first.

The first measure that I want to deal with is one of the most draconian tax measures ever brought in by the Liberal government between 1985 and 1990, which was the employer health tax. It was not only a mean-spirited tax, but it certainly put a lot of small businesses behind the eight ball in terms of payroll taxes. What we're doing here is to help small business.

With respect to small business, tax cuts mean jobs. Payroll taxes are essentially a disincentive to hire young people, to create employment. This bill supports job creation by reducing the payroll tax burden on small businesses. The phase-in of the \$400,000 employer health tax exemption is being accelerated by increasing the exemption for 1998 from \$300,000 to \$350,000 for employers and self-employed individuals. In 1999, the tax on the self-employed individuals will be eliminated. That's even more good news for people who are trying to get out there and put their lives in order, get a sense of direction in terms of getting security and in trying to make a good living.

We're not out there like the previous governments in terms of attacking small business. We're trying to help them, unlike the federal government, which has essentially turned a blind eye to small business. Their most recent measure with respect to UI premiums — they have a \$7-billion surplus. So what do they do? They say, "We're going to decrease the premium by 15 cents effective January 1, 1999," which still leaves a \$5.5-billion surplus. That is one area that really does kill jobs. I've talked to a number of small business owners, and they would say that if you decreased the UI premiums to \$2.20 per \$100 of

payroll, you would be creating hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The bottom line is that you're allowing employers to put money into their businesses and not into the coffers of the federal government, because they have no accountability. What they've been doing with that money is putting it into general revenues, creating false impressions with respect to their fiscal responsibility. What we're also going to be seeing effective January 1, 1999, is that CPP rates will be increasing 10%, so that means more money that you won't be taking home to provide for your family.

These payroll taxes by the federal government are killing jobs, and another thing they're doing in terms of harming consumers and the everyday person is that they have done nothing with respect to indexation of tax brackets. It's called "bracket creep." As you move up the income bracket, what have they done? They just tax you more. We've been paying more in terms of taxes since 1993 because of this bracket creep. People are in essence not taking as much home to deal with the inflation, because inflation has not been moving up by that much, but when they're put up and they move into another bracket, it all gets taxed by the federal government. Any offset that we've been able to put forth in terms of people's pocketbooks, in terms of our 30% tax cut, is being ravaged and attacked by the federal government through their policies with respect to UI premiums, with respect to CPP and in terms of bracket creep. What the feds have been doing is putting more money into their own revenue coffers and killing jobs and basically reducing the amount of take-home pay for the average consumer.

The policies we have put in place — I take exception to the member for Windsor-Walkerville saying that it's just as simple as if, because the American economy is doing well, Ontario is doing well. It just isn't that simple. Everybody knows that the US economy was doing very well when the NDP government was in power and we were not creating jobs in this country. This province during their entire mandate created 10,000 jobs, which is a joke. This is the most powerful province in this country and we can do much better than that.

The message you send out is very important in terms of a job creation climate and an investment climate. We've done that. In essence, the fruit of the labour of small businesses in this province is that we have 440,000 new jobs. That's certainly not totally attributable to the US economy. The basic fact is that in the automobile industry, a significant proportion of the automobiles are exported to the United States. That has been going on for the last 20 years or so. I don't accept that's the reason why this province is doing very well.

Another measure in this bill is assistance to working families, Ontario's child care supplement for working families. The bill proposes a new \$140-million child care supplement for working families, to replace the \$40-million child care tax credit for lower-income families introduced in the 1997 Ontario budget. The supplement will be available to low- and middle-income Ontario families who

are working or attending school or receiving job training and who receive the Canada child tax benefit for children under the age of seven. The supplement is calculated as the greater of a designated percentage of family-earned income in excess of \$5,000 and 50% of eligible child care expenses, up to a maximum of \$1,020 per year for each child under age seven. The supplement is reduced by 8% of family net income in excess of \$20,000. The supplement may also be reduced if the family receives a child care fee subsidy funded by Ontario.

For example, eligibility for the program disappears at a net family income of \$32,750 for families with one child under age seven, at \$45,500 for families with two children under age seven and at \$58,250 for families with three children under age seven.

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When you're looking at these types of wages, if you listen to the Liberal Party and the NDP, they would say people who are making \$32,000 are rich and that's who we've been giving the tax credit to in terms of our tax reductions. Well, the fact of the matter is they're not. They're making sure that from paycheque to paycheque they're making ends meet. They need to have the money they earn in their own pockets. It shouldn't be going directly to the government. Those people are the ones who need this money and that's who we're directing this child care supplement to, trying to help them deal with the challenges they face.

That's another measure of what this government has been doing. From day one it's been putting people first and fixing government, unlike the two previous governments we had. The workplace child care tax incentive initiative was announced in the 1998 Ontario budget to support businesses that create additional licensed child care facilities in Ontario. The workplace child care tax incentive would provide corporations with an additional 30% deduction from Ontario income for capital costs of construction or renovation of licensed child care facilities in Ontario incurred after May 5, 1998. This incentive would also be available for contributions of cash, property or services by corporations to child care operators if the contributions are used by the operator for this purpose. Capital costs for playground equipment would also qualify, and a 5% refundable tax credit would be available to unincorporated businesses.

Another measure of what this government is doing is helping people with disabilities get jobs. To support businesses that hire employees with disabilities, the workplace accessibility tax incentive would provide an additional 100% deduction for qualifying expenditures incurred to accommodate an eligible person with a disability. A 15% refundable tax credit would be provided to unincorporated businesses, qualifying expenditures or costs incurred after July 1, 1998, to accommodate qualifying employees in performing their job functions and include expenditures incurred to (1) install a passenger elevator, a platform lift or a stairway lift; (2) modify workstations and install required equipment and devices; and (3) provide the support services of a job coach, a notetaker, a sign

language interpreter, an intervenor, a reader or an attendant required by a qualifying employee.

I would say that a qualifying employee is an individual who is not related to the employer and was not employed by the employer in the preceding 12 months, works at least 60 hours per month for a period of not less than three months, qualifies for an existing federal or Ontario program for people with disabilities or is certified by a qualified practitioner to have a disability that is expected to last for more than a year and creates a substantial barrier to competitive employment.

Those are very significant measures with respect to giving a hand up to help people who have disabilities in getting them employed in the workplace. It's a very positive way of doing these things because it's an incentive for employers not only to hire them but to make the workplace much more user-friendly.

One of the more important areas that we want to deal with with respect to this act is the Tobacco Tax Act. Proposed amendments to the Tobacco Tax Act enhance existing sanctions by prohibiting possession of unmarked cigarettes by unauthorized persons and parallel the existing provisions relating to the possession of unmarked cigarettes for the purposes of sale.

Let's face it, I think the member for Windsor-Walkerville did make a significant point when we're talking teen smoking and what we should be doing with it in terms of making sure that we put in place measures that can address this. He did mention yesterday what happened in Ottawa, which was an absolute disgrace. It's reported in the Toronto Star, and I will quote:

"In Ottawa yesterday, House of Commons Speaker Gilbert Parent effectively killed the Stop the Kids Smoking bill by ruling that it imposed a tax. Bill S-13 would have slapped a 50-cent surcharge on every carton of cigarettes sold, money that would have been spent on an ad campaign to combat teenage smoking."

Senator Colin Kenny, author of the bill, said he was disappointed and urged the government to adopt the fight against teenage smoking.

"The public doesn't care about a procedure, or whether a bill imposes a tax or a levy, they just want to see action on youth smoking."

What does the federal government do? They kill a bill that is designed to deal with teenage smoking and they do it with impunity.

I would say that's something we're trying to address with respect to bringing in preventive measures in terms of making our Tobacco Tax Act work. The Tobacco Tax Act has specific provisions relating to the wholesale distribution of tobacco products: (1) Wholesale dealers selling tobacco for resale must be authorized by the minister and be issued a permit; and (2) persons purchasing tobacco for resale are only permitted to purchase it from wholesale dealers who are authorized. These requirements are critical to ensure the correct tax has been collected and remitted and that tax-exempt product has not entered the taxable distribution stream. New offences are created and fines and penalties are increased for unauthorized

wholesaling of tobacco products, either through sales or purchases.

The Tobacco Tax Act also provides a general offence provision for purchases contravening provisions of the act for which no penalty is provided. It is proposed that the minimum fine for general offences be increased from \$200 to \$1,000 and the maximum be increased from \$5,000 to \$25,000. The existing jail term of three to six months would be removed in light of the enhanced amendments proposed for specific offences relating to the wholesaling of tobacco.

I'd say that what we're dealing with here in terms of tobacco is a very serious issue. It has to be addressed. There has to be some leadership by the federal government. There has to be some action taken. You can't simply say, "We're going to increase the price of cigarettes," with no specific purpose other than to put money into the coffers of the federal government. There has to be a plan of attack as to how to deal with teenage smoking. They had an opportunity to deal with it yesterday and they crushed it. They killed it, and they didn't even give an opportunity for public hearings. I'm very disappointed in the federal government, but that hasn't been the first time.

There are other areas I want to deal with. Of fundamental importance is the Ambulance Act. Schedule A of the Services Improvement Act, 1997, amended the Ambulance Act to provide for the transfer to municipalities of full funding responsibility for land ambulance services as of January 1, 1998, and full responsibility for ensuring the proper provision of such services as of January 1, 2000.

The proposed amendments (1) broaden the definition of "designated area" to include upper-tier municipalities, where designated by the minister as part of the consolidated municipal service management structure; (2) make it possible to consolidate service delivery management in a single-service delivery agent for land ambulance and other services in any area of the province; and (3) create new regulation-making powers for, among other things, agreements and arbitrations as a means of determining the apportionment of land ambulance service costs within or between upper-tier municipalities and/or delivery agents.

The final area I want to cover has to do with the Estate Administration Tax Act, 1998, and the Estates Act. On October 22, 1998, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Ontario's probate fees are taxes and that therefore the regulations which attempted to impose the fees were not authorized by statute. The court suspended this declaration of invalidity for six months, until April 22, 1999, to enable the province to address this issue. In response to this a new act, the Estate Administration Tax Act, is enacted. The act "imposes a tax on an estate when an estate certificate is issued" and applies "to all estate certificates issued after May 14, 1950." The amount of tax payable under the new act is the same as the amount of fees that were payable as probate fees under the previous legislation.

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In essence, what we've done in that area is to address fairness in terms of the estate tax act, because that's what

the issue was with respect to the probate fees that had been implemented by the previous government. The decision essentially strikes down the measures that were taken by the previous government, but what we're dealing with here is addressing the concerns of fairness.

In closing, Bill 81 fundamentally deals with implementing the budget of 1998. The Tax Credits and Revenue Protection Act, 1998, helps child care and it helps working families in terms of the tax credits that are put in place not only for the working families and their children but also for the corporations that can increase the number of child care spaces.

It also increases access for Ontarians with disabilities. This is the first government to introduce legislation with respect to dealing with those with a disability. You can say whatever you wish with respect to that, but the bottom line is that we're the first government that took measures. There are other measures that we're taking under this particular piece of legislation and also under the Human Rights Code that protect those individuals who have a disability.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bradley: I have a question for the member. He had his usual speech blaming the federal government, blaming previous governments, blaming everybody but his own government, and that's part and parcel of all the speeches he delivers in the House. I'm surprised he doesn't run for the federal House of Commons, but he is here and he will make the speeches he makes. I have one question for him: If he feels so strongly about the tobacco industry and the problem with children smoking, why doesn't he join with the government of British Columbia in a suit against the major tobacco companies in this country?

Mr Bisson: I just want to make a point on the comments of the member. He went to great lengths to talk about how the big reason that the economy of Ontario is doing well by and large is because of the tax cut. That's the argument he puts forward, but there are a couple of things that have to be said.

First of all, we have to understand why we pay taxes and where that money goes. By and large, we all know that the majority of our income tax dollars go to pay for education and health care. Those are the two biggest things they pay for. What ends up happening is that if we were to make the choice these Tories are making for us, which is that the only way to get the economy to accelerate is to lower taxes — the problem with that argument is that you'd have to lower taxes so low to put dollars into people's pockets that you literally would have to end programs like health care and education to be able to bring them down to the level to have the effect they're looking for. That's counterproductive, because people then have to go out and buy insurance or they've got to negotiate it with their employers, as they do in the United States in some cases, to have health care coverage.

I was talking on the Internet about two weeks ago to somebody who lives just north of Florida. The person was saying to me that they were paying a \$550-a-month premium to get extended coverage above what the

employer provides for them already. We were comparing salaries, and yes, the person's take-home pay was larger because they were paying less tax, but when you add in what they pay by way of premiums to get health care coverage, they actually make about the same as we do here.

The problem with their argument is that to get the kind of stimulus in the economy that you need, you would have to drive taxes down to a level that would end services, which you would then end up having to buy out in the private sector. The amount we're saving on the tax cut doesn't have a heck of a lot to do with what's happening in the economy. By and large, it's what's happening in the United States and generally in the Canadian economy.

Mr Young: I would like to comment on the comments of the member for Cochrane South. He said that the greatest things we spend money on are education and health care.

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask you to comment on what the member for Simcoe Centre said.

Mr Young: Thank you, Speaker. There's a common belief that the greatest amount of money we spend in government, where our tax dollars go, is for education and health care. When we became the government in 1995, that was simply not true, and it's something the NDP still don't understand. In fact, we were spending \$9 billion a year of interest on debt — not paying the debt back, just paying the interest on the debt. For a family with charge cards, that's like you make the minimum payment on your charge card and you're not paying any of it back. That \$9 billion we were paying on interest on debt, most of which his government created, is more money than the provincial government was spending on all education. Education was actually third, after health care and interest on debt. That's one of the main things we've tried to fix in our government and one of the main things we are fixing in our government.

Talking about low-income people, in our first year and a half in government, one of the main things we did was that we added 140,000 low-income Ontarians on to the Ontario drug benefit plan. These were people who in some cases couldn't afford the drugs because their income wasn't high enough, and the social worker would say to them, "If you go on welfare, you can go on the Ontario drug benefit plan." We changed that so that if they're low-income, they can still get the drugs they need for their health. That was something I'm very, very proud of.

But we also had a tax cut which applies for all working people. The minimum tax cut you can have in Ontario in our government is 18% if you're a top earner, \$100,000 or \$200,000 a year, but the maximum tax cut is actually for the lower taxpayers, up to a 90% tax cut.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I just want to ask the member for Simcoe Centre how much his government has borrowed.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Tascona: I'm very pleased to respond to the members' comments. The member for St Catharines seems

to be a little sensitive with respect to his federal colleagues in Ottawa, and I can understand why he would be with respect to the types of policies they're putting in place. I think it's just fair comment when you're dealing with fundamental issues, such as people's livelihoods, the money they take home every day, that they realize and understand the facts of who's taking the money out of their pockets and spending it.

To the member for Cochrane South, when we talk about the economy, it's not that simple, that the economy is growing just based on tax cuts. I never said that. What I said was that a number of measures have led to the increase in our economy. It has been attributable to a number of factors to do with the climate we put in this province: getting rid of pro-union legislation, getting rid of red tape, and the tax cuts mean a great deal in terms of putting more money in people's pockets and encouraging a climate where there's greater investment. The facts speak for themselves. There are 440,000 new jobs that have been created in this province since we came in.

On the comments of the member for Halton Centre, certainly we've been spending more money in the educational sector. We're spending over \$15 billion this year in education, putting in provincial standards, what the people want. With respect to health care, we're spending more than we ever have in this province; we're spending close to \$19 billion. But the bottom line is that we're setting a very important health care system so people can get health care when they need it and where they want it.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: We are dealing with a bill in the provincial Legislature, and there are parts of the legislation that people will find quite acceptable and other parts which will draw more of a debate and perhaps some disagreement.

We've talked about economies overall. My good friend from Etobicoke-Humber and I were exchanging some pleasantries across here while other things were happening, talking about the difference between, say, Ontario and British Columbia. I have no reason to defend the NDP government of British Columbia. I simply want to put things in a fair context.

If we look at Ontario and its relationship with the United States, we are far more reliant on the booming American economy for our exports than is British Columbia. Remember when we in Ontario and in fact much of the country were experiencing a pretty deep recession? People were saying, "Look at British Columbia. It's doing fairly well. It seems to be recession-proof," during that time. If you will recall, the American economy was not doing exceptionally well at that time. That was one of the reasons that President Bush was defeated in 1992, because he was seen by some people to be part of the problem; that was a negative for him at that particular point in time. The American economy wasn't doing exceedingly well. As it heated up, we in Ontario benefited immensely from that.

That's the point I make: Back then, British Columbia seemed to be immune from that. That's because British Columbia does so much of its trade with the Far East, and the Far East wasn't as hit with a recession as the United States was at that time. Now we have a situation where British Columbia, which relies upon a lot of trade with the Far East, is not doing well because countries such as Japan and South Korea and Thailand and China are experiencing considerable difficulties and are not making the kind of purchases, whether it's raw materials, whether it's commodities, whether it's finished products, that they did before. So we're now seeing British Columbia experiencing more of a recession than we are.

As I say, I have no reason at all to defend the government of British Columbia; I simply want to put it in that context.

Second, I heard a lot of talk about tobacco problems. Gee, the last time the federal government raised tobacco taxes, what seemed to happen — correct me if I'm wrong — was that the provincial government seemed to be opposed to that. Now there was a bill before the House that would have dealt with tobacco taxes. It was ruled out of order because, as you know — in our private members' business as well, our Speaker would rule out of order a bill which implied or called for the increasing of a tax. Our Speaker would get advice from the table, which I surmise would be that the bill was out of order. That doesn't mean that the government shouldn't do it, but the bill would have been ruled out of order.

What the Ontario government could do, if it wanted to have a major impact, is join in the suit, along with the government of British Columbia, against the major cigarette manufacturers. That would be a reasonable stance to take on the part of our province. Many states in the United States, whether they're Republican or Democrat, or whether the governors or the legislatures are seen to be small-c conservative or small-l liberal — there seem to be a fair number of states taking action against the tobacco companies.

If you watched the testimony that took place, I thought it was quite revealing. They had the major presidents, vice-presidents and others from the tobacco companies come before the committees and really concede that in fact they knew how addictive cigarettes were, that they did aim their advertising at young people, trying to get new smokers, and that they did not reveal just how addictive nicotine is. It's always easy for those of us who are non-smokers to preach to smokers to quit smoking, but there is a recognition that nicotine is a very addictive drug. That's something the tobacco manufacturers, the cigarette manufacturers, tried to hide from the public in the US, so I think they're fair game for such a suit. The money that would be derived from that could well be applied to the medical care system in any jurisdiction, because the smoking of cigarettes, tobacco products, has had overall a detrimental effect on the health of people.

That's something I would suggest to this government, as Dalton McGuinty asked the government in the House the other day whether they might be joining in that particular suit. It's a good suggestion. So many have done

it in the United States, and I know many people who advise the Premier think a lot of the things that happen in particularly the Republican states in the United States should be applied to Ontario. So there's a suggestion the government could take up.

Now I look at some other issues contained in this bill: the estate taxes. It says in the information provided on the bill that Bill 81's amendments to fix the estate fee court ruling problem basically introduce a new Mike Harris tax that will raise about \$1 billion. It is a new, retroactive tax going back 48 years. This means, of course, that the Mike Harris government has decided that the fees that were imposed by the previous NDP government on estates are now going to be adopted.

I can recall — my friends in the New Democratic Party will remember this; some of my Conservative friends will remember this — that Mike Harris put up an awful fight against the increase in those estate fees. I think it was 1992. I remember his speeches in this House, the questions he directed to the government. Some of the Conservative members of Parliament who were in opposition at that time directed some very scintillating questions to the government concerning this significant increase in the probate fees or the estate fees. The government defended that position at that time, but you gained the impression that if Mike Harris were ever to get in government, one of the first things he would do was cut that probate fee way back down. He decided not to.

I've had many people phone my office, mostly to inquire what was going to happen. I initially didn't know, didn't know what the reaction of the Mike Harris government would be. They speculated to me that they expected that Mike Harris, having been so critical of the NDP raising this probate fee back in 1992, would have scaled it back considerably. Some were even hopeful that they would have made the estate tax that was there for so long illegal. I understood why the government didn't do that, but I really thought this represented an opportunity for the Mike Harris government to perhaps take another look at this estate fee that they found to be so reprehensible and repulsive when the NDP was in power.

That did not happen, and I can understand that. The government has lost considerable revenue because of its 30% tax cut overall, which most benefits the wealthiest people in the province in terms of dollars. I hear the Conservative members say — I know they have speaking notes, and their speaking notes say, "You're supposed to say that the lowest-income people got the best break." What you have to understand is, what are the real dollars back in people's pockets? If you look at the real dollar amounts, the wealthiest people are going to get the most money. If you want to look at figures, \$60,000 is more than \$2,000. The bank presidents, who are well paid, are going to do much better than a person working at a fairly low-income job. There we are. We had a situation where we had a 30% tax cut implemented while we were running a deficit in this province.

I know there was a debate within the previous Conservative caucus. Some members of the now govern-

ment caucus, at that time the opposition Conservative caucus — I won't mention them in the House tonight; I've mentioned them before — said, "What you do is wait until you balance the budget and then you can lower taxes." They didn't win that debate. As a result, the government has had to go out and borrow about \$24 billion worth of additional funds to make up for that lost revenue. That's unfortunate.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Mr Parker mentions that they were slashing and burning as well — I think that's what I heard him say — at the same time. Most, in fact all, small-c conservative economists I've talked to about it have said that the combination of significant and substantial cuts to government expenditures and programs at the same time as implementing a provincial income tax cut would have a contractionary effect. Now, these aren't Liberals, these aren't socialists, these are your Conservative economists who will tell you that.

We are very fortunate in this province that we live next door to the United States, which is booming right now. The economy in the United States — I don't know who you can give credit to. Some people will say it's President Bill Clinton, others will say it's the United States Congress, others will say it's just good luck. But what has happened is that the United States is experiencing a booming economy and they are buying a lot of goods and services from the province of Ontario.

1940

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): Good luck? Been around long enough.

Mr Bradley: Perhaps the member for Halton wishes to give Bill Clinton the credit. I'll send a letter to the President that says the member for Halton agrees that it was President Clinton.

Mr Chudleigh: Good luck, Jim.

Mr Bradley: I say that; it's the President, perhaps. The point I'm making is that they have enjoyed a very good economy, and since we're very much an exporting province, we have done well in our exports to a booming economy. They've had low interest rates, and of course now we have low interest rates. Up until about 1992 or 1993, we had a high interest rate policy. I won't mention Brian Mulroney because that always starts my friend from Etobicoke-Humber with some interjections. So I won't mention Brian Mulroney was in power when we had the high interest rates. I simply won't mention that.

Another thing I always find amusing — I've said this in the House before and in most cases you can say that it's true, that it applies — is that when there's some good news, this government is first in line to take the credit. When there's something that might be bad news, they're last in line to take the responsibility.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): You never give us credit for anything, Jim.

Mr Bradley: I do. I want to give you credit for something. Let me tell you, when we bring in the Vintners Quality Alliance Act — remember, I asked the government to bring that in? I said, "When you bring it in, I will be the first one with words of praise," and I was. I

remember the night we talked about another piece of legislation dealing with brew pubs. During my remarks that night, I said: "You know something? What we need now is the Vintners Quality Alliance Act." The minister listened; I want to give him credit. When we have the debate on that bill, the first thing I'm going to say is I want to give him full credit for accepting my recommendation to bring in the vintners quality alliance bill. I know it will be a good bill. Just so the government members don't think I'm being negative all the time, I want to give some credit tonight.

But my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs would know, for instance, that the Ontario child care supplement for working families, money that will become available — it's not available yet. The cheques will go out during the election campaign or just before the election campaign. That's a prediction I have. I could be wrong but I suspect it will be the case.

You know something? As I recall, \$100 million of that is federal assistance; \$40 million is from last year's child care tax credit. This is to create a new program. In other words, it's mostly federal money. But do you know whose name is going to be on the bottom of that cheque? I can tell you whose name is going to be on the bottom of the cheque: the provincial government representative. They'll characterize this as a provincial payment. That's what I mean when I say first in line to accept the credit, last in line to accept the responsibility. I think people should know that.

What was particularly cruel was the clawback I saw. There were some people who benefited — they're not well-off people; they're people of modest income, modest means — from a new government program in this field. The provincial government learned of it. You know how they always say: "If only you'll help these people. We need more in Ontario." So they put more in for these people and the Ontario government took it back. They had a clawback for those people. I'll tell you, that created a lot of resentment because they thought here was a step forward for once, and they were happy to see it — I was happy to see it as well — but the provincial government clawed it back from those people. Most unfair. It didn't allow those people to advance the way we would like. Most unfortunate, but that was the decision this government made.

Mr Ford: The feds are giving us 15 cents back —

Mr Bradley: I'm glad the member intervenes because it seems to me that when I see these transfer payments come to some provinces, they actually spend them on such things as health care and education and social services. When the federal government transfers money to Ontario, they give it away in the tax cut. They take the money and give it away in the tax cut, with the richest people in the province benefiting the most. I wonder about that. Yet they don't have money for the PSA test, the prostate-specific antigen test, which people have to pay for now. Men who reach a certain age and are more vulnerable to prostate cancer —

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I guess we should just raise taxes, Jim.

Mr Bradley: I'm glad you're intervening during this. I'll send the Hansard to the people who have written to me and called me about having prostate cancer and how much this test means to them. I'll send them the Hansard of that particular intervention. Thank you.

I look at that and say this is probably something where there's a consensus among the three parties that it's something the government should finance, because it's so important in the early detection of prostate cancer, which is important. Many of us have friends or relatives who have experienced prostate cancer. Some of our former colleagues in this House who are friends of ours have gone through this experience.

I had a letter just the other day from a person who lives in the Parry Sound area, someone I've known for a long time, who's a friend of Mr Eves as well. The person said how important that test was. The person was detected relatively early, was able to receive some considerable treatment and is doing quite well now. They certainly mentioned the PSA test as being important. I would hope that could be included in the future, because with all the money the government's going to get from the estate taxes, the probate fees, some of those funds could be directed into that particular test for people, to help them out.

I want to indicate as well, because I heard a member mention, and it is referred to in this bill, the land ambulance services. One of the transfers that took place that I don't think was appropriate — some may be appropriate; some of the transfers I think were accepted by municipalities — was the transfer of responsibility for land ambulances. That's something that is best under provincial jurisdiction. It allows the province to make sure there's some kind of equality across the province, although it's hard to have complete equality. It's something where we want to make sure every area has equal access, as much as is possible within the geographic conditions and the concentrations of population this province has.

Downloading that to the municipalities was not a particularly wise move. It may save the provincial government some considerable money. I think it will open the floodgates to huge American companies coming in here. There's already one, Rural/Metro, which has made incursions into Ontario. Rural/Metro, once it gets a substantial foothold here, is going to be charging an awful lot more than we pay at the present time for ambulance services, again something we consider to be basic here.

In the United States they consider that individuals shall pay for some of those things. That's why we say in Canada that generally speaking — there are exceptions to this now — we've been pretty proud in this province, all three parties, over the years, that we have had a system where your health care doesn't depend on the amount of money in your wallet or in your bank account but depends on the need you have. I think we should try to maintain that.

I see a danger that with the heavy infiltration of these American ambulance companies and the responsibilities going to municipalities which are already facing some

additional financial burdens, what we're going to have instead is user fees in that particular field of health care, which are going to be fine for wealthy people but certainly not for those of modest income.

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The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bisson: The member for St Catharines raises a point yet again, and I think it's a good opportunity to comment on it: He talks about how the government somehow thinks Ontario is an island unto itself when it comes to the winds of the economy, both inside Canada and outside Canada, and more particularly with the United States.

The argument the Tories seem to be putting forward is that absolutely everything that's going on that's good in the economy of Ontario is based on this stupid, silly 30% tax cut that they put in place. They fail to recognize the reality is that the Ontario economy is very interlinked with what is happening in the American economy generally. Quite frankly, he was correct. The previous Conservative member tried to say that during the late 1980s and early 1990s the economy of the United States was not in a recession. I was wondering what American economy he was talking about, because I remember quite well what was happening in the economy. The member for St Catharines made the point. In fact, one of the reasons that George Bush, a very popular American president, didn't win his second term was because of the ills the American public had when it came to what was happening in the economy of the United States. They did not have confidence in their President to find some solutions to put forward in order to —

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): That's not why George Bush lost.

Mr Bisson: Well, anyway, it really astounds me, because the reality is that our economies are interlinked. Yes, provincial governments can have a positive effect when it comes to being able to create jobs, but to somehow make it look as if everything that's going on is a result of this tax cut is really a silly idea. As I said before, to get the kind of effect that the Tories claim to get, you would have to cut taxes to the point where you'd have to shut down entire services. It makes absolutely no sense.

Mr Wettlaufer: I'd like to address the speech of the member for St Catharines. It's very interesting how he talks about the tax cuts of our government. I can recall that in the 1996 and 1997 finance committee pre-budget hearings for the Ministry of Finance, the Liberals' own finance critic, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, advocated sales tax cuts. We had a number of presenters come to the hearings in those two years who were very well-known, very well-respected economists, and they told us right out that there was no benefit to sales tax cuts; however, there was tremendous benefit to the cuts in income tax. The Liberals can't have it both ways.

Mr Lessard: Sure they can. Come on.

Mr Wettlaufer: The NDP member for Windsor-Riverside says, "Yes, they can." Well, the Liberals try to have it both ways but they can't. You either advocate tax

cuts or you don't, and we carried through on the one that had the most benefit for the consumers of Ontario.

In addition, they talk about the American economy and how well it's doing, and that it's because of the American economy that Ontario is doing so well. They also criticize Brian Mulroney, who was the Prime Minister of the day, who brought in free trade. Well, free trade has benefited all of Canada. Who opposed it? The Liberals opposed it. The NDP opposed it too, and neither one of them have yet to see the light.

They want to take credit for a lot of things they haven't carried through on, but we are the ones who took the action.

Mr Michael Brown: I'm always delighted when the member for St Catharines has one of his rare opportunities to speak in the House.

I didn't hear the member for St Catharines say — and I know he meant to say it, because he would recall that Mike Harris had said, "A fee is a tax." That's what he said, and today we are finding out that's exactly what he meant, because he is now turning a fee into a tax. He's coming before the Legislature today, finally, to make probate fees a tax. I had spoken about this issue back in May. The government of course waited for the court decision to make them so-called honest in this matter. I know I've got a lot of calls in my constituency where they are saying, "Now that these probate fees have been struck down, what's going to happen?" Well, now we can tell them: "The Harris government has made that fee a tax and you will have to pay. Anything you have paid is still paid because it's retroactive for 48 years."

Fees in general are pretty interesting with this government. Our numbers show they're up about 400% across the board as revenue sources for this government. That is absolutely astounding. In the liquor licensing board, for example, do you know what the price of transferring a liquor licence between a husband and wife is in Ontario today, just from one name to the other? It's \$1,000, which is a fourfold increase over what it was before these people came to power. I agree with Mike Harris: A fee is a tax.

Mr Lessard: It's always a pleasure to respond to the remarks of the member for St Catharines because he always talks very conscientiously about where this government is going with its taxation policies in Ontario. Sometimes I think that maybe the next member of the Liberal caucus to come over and join us here in the back row should be the member for St Catharines because of the way he speaks with a social conscience about so many issues. He talks about the unfairness of the Tory tax scheme. I agree with him a lot of times when he mentions that point of view.

I don't know whether he mentioned the propaganda that this government is involved in to try and sell its budget agenda to the people of Ontario; almost \$50 million in propaganda that they've been spending. I've just got a few things I received in my own mailbox. Here's one: Welfare Reform: Making Welfare Work. That was one I got recently. Then there was another one: Health Report to

Taxpayers. That was a nice-looking one as well. Then I got this one, which is probably the one that I got the most calls in my office about: Find out more about what the Harris government is doing about education. That was one that people were quite upset about, I can tell you. Then I got another one about education that I used to measure my son's height. He'll be six years old in December and his name is Brett. It's quite useful. I've got this one: Report to Taxpayers: Jobs and the Economy. I've run out of my two minutes and I haven't even got through all these brochures yet.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: I appreciate the remarks of each of the members. I'm sorry I forgot to mention the propaganda. The member has mentioned that now. I'm expecting any day now that the taxpayers coalition will be protesting the \$50 million that this government is now spending on what I would call self-serving, blatantly political advertising.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's not \$50 million.

Mr Bradley: It's now up to that. I think the member for Niagara Falls should know that there are some new commercials out. Perhaps he hasn't heard them. There are some new commercials out that have now hiked the price, and I suspect there will be more pamphlets. Every time I go to the mailbox there's a new pamphlet paid for by the taxpayers. I think a lot of the taxpayers don't realize that the entire cost of that comes out of their pockets; money that could go to keeping the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines open; money that could go to keeping schools open, such as Merritton High School, Lakeport Secondary School, St Catharines Collegiate, Lakebreeze Elementary School; money that could go to pay for that PSA test, the prostate-specific antigen test. Instead it's being squandered on self-serving political advertising.

These are the slick television commercials, these are the radio commercials, these are the full-page ads that we see in newspapers, and precious few editorials — I know the Brantford Expositor had one — condemning them. I don't know why. And of course, the pamphlets that we get.

This is from a government that was going to save money, that would never squander money on anything that wasn't absolutely essential. That's what Mike Harris was going to be all about. Now here he is, making sure he's got all that money from those probate fees, those huge increases. He's now confirming them. He's squandering thousands and millions, \$50 million now, on self-serving political advertising, and this from the person who was supposed to be the taxpayers' friend.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: I would remind the good people of Ontario who are watching that we now only have 10 minutes to speak on this magnum opus. As you can imagine, how can we, in nine minutes or so, touch on the many things that are contained in this bill?

The intent of this government has always been to make sure we have a bottleneck kind of debate in this House so

that, as you get to the neck, you get the picture of how little debate there is, as a result of the changes this government has made.

The member for St Catharines, just to touch on this, talked about the advertising of this government. To a question addressed to him, the Premier of Ontario said, "We've been consulting with people and they've been saying to us, 'Talk to us.'" That's what he said. The Premier said that people are saying out there, "Talk to us."

His response is, these fetid materials that people have to deal with — and I say "fetid" to the extent that this government, when they were on this very side, said that it was improper for the government of the time to spend money to communicate with the people of Ontario. That is why people like us in the opposition are angry, not necessarily because a government decides to spend money to communicate with the public, that it's a bad thing. But to have heard from the opposition at the time that what we did was wrong and to see them now do the very same things they attacked us on, in the mind and the words of the Premier as being talking to people only, I find that contradictory and unacceptable.

We need to point those things out. When the members for Halton Centre, Kitchener and others say that this income tax cut is a good thing, we need to present the other view, and the other view, in my humble opinion, is a very cogent one. My point is that there is no evidence to support their argument that giving a \$6-billion income tax cut is going to spur the economy on.

Mr Wettlaufer: It already has.

Mr Marchese: There is absolutely no evidence other than hearsay and other than these fine Tories saying —

Mr Maves: And 450,000 jobs.

Mr Marchese: — and they laugh and they say, "How about these 450,000 jobs?" These jobs are not connected to the income tax cut. There is no economist I am aware of —

Mr Young: They just don't get it.

Mr Marchese: We need the member for Halton Centre, on a fine day, to produce some evidence here in this House and say: "The member for Fort York, I've got it. Here it is." I await that moment from these two members next to me —

Mr Wettlaufer: Read the finance committee reports from Hansard.

Mr Marchese: — because all they can say to us is, "It is true because we Tories say so."

To continue, this \$6-billion income tax cut isn't money that you have in your pocket. You've got to borrow money to give it away to people. That's why you guys have a big deficit. That's why you are loading the rest of us with a big tax deficit, because you had to borrow close to \$20 billion to give wealthy Ontarians a tax break. While the CEOs make millions of dollars, they are the very ones who are saying, "You're spending too much on social programs; you're spending too much on health; you're spending too much on education," as they take from you that income tax cut that they do not need.

To borrow \$20 billion, to keep the deficit high so that we can have user fees to make up for that difference, so that you can make your wealthy friends happy — it is obscene. It is more than obscene to have these Tories argue the benefits of such a plan when it's devastating the middle class that's left, the working poor, the poor and the homeless.

In this bill there is mention of the Ambulance Act as part of the first order of business in this particular magnum opus, and it's a \$200-million download to the property taxpayers and to the tenants of Ontario. These people have not just downloaded ambulances to the tune of \$200 million; they have downloaded many of the health services, amounting to \$250 million, as well. They've downloaded housing, they've downloaded child care, they've downloaded welfare to the municipalities. When you boys claimed that you were going to disentangle this whole process, you then entangled municipalities with more costs.

There is in this bill an attempt to deal with your \$200-million child care which you announced in 1996, and did nothing. You then re-announced it in 1997 as a tax credit. Then you scrapped that program — it's pretty well dead — and you're introducing \$85 a month for each child under seven. This is called the Ontario child care supplement — nothing to do with child care, no link necessarily to child care except that hopefully before Christmas you're going to send everybody an \$85 child care supplement. It will not increase child care one ounce in Ontario. It's all neatly designed to introduce something so that the people of Ontario can say: "Eighty-five bucks is better than nothing. Thank you, Mike Harris, for that gift. We could use it."

Sure, you whacked social assistance recipients with close to a \$600-million cut. You then take some of that money and give it back to some folks and you say: "Look, we're helping you out. We're giving you \$85 a month as a child care supplement."

Do you see the shell game? I know you don't, Speaker, but good folks of Ontario, you see the shell game. You take money out of here and then you give it back and you say, "We're giving you money." It's like the income tax cut. We give you money here and then we whack you with a whole lot of user fees. We've got birth certificates that you probably had to pay \$10 for. Now you've got to pay \$60 for that birth certificate. You've got tuition fees doubling under these fine people here. You've got access to private information files that have doubled or tripled. You've got prescription fees. You've got poor folk out there having to pay a whole heap of money for this income tax cut that you say is creating 420,000 jobs.

It's pitiful; it really is. It's the job of the electorate and it's our job to find the time, as we debate these bills, to raise these issues. There is in this magnum opus yet another matter dealing with the Teachers' Pension Act and these fine Tories once again dictatorially, unilaterally decided to change the benefits of that pension act and they've decided not to consult the teachers, the federations involved in this. I assume that again in their omnipotence

and good kindness, good grace, they didn't have to consult with these people because I'm assuming that they would say: "We know what we're doing. We don't have to consult the federations because what we have done is something they will like."

That may or may not be true, but it's a big program for teachers and they want not just to be consulted but to be part of the decision-making process. So the federations are saying: "Let us sever this bill. Let's sever that part of this particular bill so we can deal with it and give you the benefit of our experience, because it affects us."

This is a big bill and you people put it all together as a way of minimizing the debate. Ten minutes is not adequate for this kind of debate. There is a whole lot to say. We want to urge the people of Ontario to pay attention to what is happening in this place, to fight back, to ask questions of these fine people who haven't read this bill and don't know what's in it.

2010

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Galt: It is quite interesting to hear the member for Fort York, his usual kind of speech, but I think the word that really stands out was when he talked about being "obscene." I think what's been obscene in this past while was a doubling of the debt back in the early 1990s, the increase of taxes, over 30 tax increases while they were in office. That indeed was obscene.

They talk about the booming economy in the US. That didn't start on June 8, 1995. The economy was booming in the US in the early 1990s when this province was going through a massive recession, the most significant recession since back in the Dirty Thirties. That is what's obscene about what has been going on in this province; devastating, what that government did to Ontario and to the residents. They weren't the spenders like the Liberals back in the late 1980s. They doubled spending. They had no idea where to start or stop with the spending; they just taxed and spent and taxed and spent. But it was the NDP that just went out and borrowed, and borrowed extensively, so that we had a horrendous debt.

He talks about downloading and ambulance services and disentanglement. They started talking about disentanglement, and it was just a great idea, but what happened? It died on the order paper. They got into a social contract. They broke every contract that the government had in Ontario. Absolutely every contract was broken by the NDP government. That is what I would refer to as being truly obscene, when they would do that kind of thing to every collective agreement. This is a socialist party, they had a socialist government, they believed in collective agreements and what did they do? They broke absolutely every one that was in the province. Trying to balance the budget and trying to cut spending I agree with, but not breaking every collective agreement.

Mr Bradley: My first lament is that the member didn't have at least 20 minutes to be able to address his remarks to this very comprehensive bill, because how can he possibly canvass all the issues that are part of this bill in 10 minutes?

I note as well that the member, while he made some early reference to the spending orgy of this government on advertising, didn't get the chance he would have had if he'd had full time to talk about the fact that every time you turn on your television set and see one of those government of Ontario ads, you have to know you're paying for that. Those are your hard-earned dollars that could go to more productive expenditures being spent on government advertising.

The member would be aware that there are a number of user fees which have gone up under this government. Mike Harris, when he was leader of the Conservative Party and not leader of the government, particularly when he was talking about his leadership campaign against Dianne Cunningham, said that a tax increase is the same as a fee, so if you raise fees, you have raised taxes. I think if you look carefully at this government, you will see that throughout the government it has increased its fees rather significantly. While it brings down one tax, it increases fees.

We know that user fees do not take into account a person's ability to pay, and the member would know that, therefore the wealthiest people in the province are quite able to pay fees, whether it's at the local level, a health care fee or something else. The wealthiest people do not find it an imposition, but people of modest income, people who are having these so-called new jobs in the economy, \$8-, \$9- and \$10-dollar-an-hour jobs, would find it mighty difficult to meet those fees. I know the member may want to make reference to that in his wrap-up.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I just wanted to comment on the presentation made by my colleague from Fort York and say, as has been mentioned by the member for St Catharines, that had he had a little bit more time, I'm sure he would have been able to comment further on some of the other pieces in this legislation, the part, for example, that deals with the changes to the Teachers' Pension Act and purports to simply put into legislation the changes that were agreed upon between the government and the teachers' federation with respect to the Teachers' Pension Act, changes which the Ontario Teachers' Federation is now saying to us and to the government they had virtually no time to look at and that they were not consulted in a real way until after the legislation was introduced. They have not had any opportunity to actually look through it, and as they are beginning to look through this legislation, they are worried about the potential impact of some of the changes suggested in here, so they've asked that this particular section be severed.

I'll be interested in what the government says, because I know that my colleague from Fort York would agree with me that the most sensible thing for the government to do would be to heed the advice of the Ontario Teachers' Federation and simply, at the very least, sever the last part from the bill and allow proper time for discussion. That advice is something the government could follow in other areas of policy as well as other pieces of this legislation, but we know that the government intends to proceed with this, so we will wait to see the impact of some of the other changes.

In the fashion that has come to be the norm for this government, they ram through legislation without thinking it through, without letting it go through the normal process of discussion, having bills go out to committee, and then we discover later down the line that they have to bring in a subsequent piece of legislation, as they have done in the property tax fiasco, to fix the mistakes they have made by hurrying as they have in the earlier stages.

Mr Chudleigh: The member for Fort York asked for evidence that tax cuts create jobs. I've got it. Here is the proof — 30% cut in the tax rate: double the growth of the other nine provinces, 440,000 new jobs and going up; revenues up by \$6 billion and going up; consumer spending, the highest in years; auto industry, booming; housing starts, the highest in eight years; health care spending, the highest in history; education spending, the highest in history; tax revenues, the highest in history and going up; 340,000 fewer people on welfare and going down; interest rates, going down; unemployment, going down. In fact, everything that should be up is up and everything that should be down is down. Member for Fort York, I've got it. Listen. This is the proof.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Response.

Mr Marchese: Would that the NDP had had these good economic times that these Tories have been blessed with. We didn't have the same blessing.

Mr Young: Here we go: good fortune again.

Mr Marchese: Many of you will know, those of you who have made this casual observation, that unemployment was very high as a result of high unemployment in the country. We had a great deal of cost in welfare. The transfer payments were down. As a result of high unemployment, we had revenues that were down.

The member for Halton North says, "Here is the evidence, income tax cuts," and then he lists a whole series of things that are going on, and by corollary links them magically.

Mr Young: It's all good news.

Mr Marchese: It's not evidence that one is linked to the other. That's the point. Bring in the evidence, Halton Centre.

The member for Northumberland talks about the word "obscene." I will tell you why it is obscene. We borrowed when we were in government to pay for our needs, because the economy was down and we faced the worst recession in the history of Canada, literally close to the worst since 1929. What's obscene is that in the good times these Tories have had over the last three years, they're borrowing billions and billions of dollars for the income tax cut, as a result of which we have the kind of deficit that these people are trying to deal with. The reason the deficit is not at zero is that we have borrowed \$20 billion to give out the \$6 billion in income tax cuts. That's why it's obscene, because we're doing that in good times. When we should have reduced the deficit to zero, they're borrowing. That's obscene.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Galt: Just listening to the wrap-up of the member for Fort York and some of his comments, I have some empathy for him and his party, because the recession was

in place when they took office and it was a result of the tax, spend and borrow policies of that previous government, which had gone hog-wild with their spending, with their taxation. No wonder we were into recessionary times in the early 1990s. But it was only their policies that maintained it. They could have turned it around with the proper economic policies.

Bill 81, the Tax Credits and Revenue Protection Act, completes all the budgetary activities or things that were brought out in the budget back in 1998. The measures in this bill are the result of consulting, the result of listening to the people of Ontario and expressing those concerns in the budget and, as a result, into this particular bill. This bill is about helping the average, ordinary person here in Ontario, the hard-working small business owner, helping the hard-working parents of the province, as well as helping Ontarians with disabilities.

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This bill is about creating jobs, and along with many of our other tax cuts, it will create a tremendous number of jobs. In this particular area we're talking about tax credits, a whole wide range of tax credits that will leave capital for the business owner to reinvest. By reinvesting, we'll be able to create jobs. We're not talking about low-paying jobs, as we often hear the opposition say, we're talking about good-paying jobs in the high-tech industries. This is something the Minister of Finance mentioned just the other day, the number of jobs that will be created there, such as digital imaging, computer animation and special effects. These are the kinds of things the tax credit will help to stimulate.

By doing this, we're helping our Canadian culture and some of the things that are happening there. We're providing a boost to the recording industry. It will be one of the largest promoters of Canadian talent. In the movie industry and the entertainment industry, we have a tremendous amount of Canadian talent. We used to hear about our Canadian talent going to Hollywood, to California. That's not necessary today with the kind of films that are being produced right around Queen's Park here in Toronto. This will amount to something in the neighbourhood of a 20% refundable tax credit for those areas that qualify.

There's also a real advantage in this bill for small business. We're looking at ways of developing capital for small business. One is through the community small business investment fund, and this bill will extend the deadline until December 31, 1999. I'm particularly interested in this aspect of the bill, nicknamed CSBIS, community small business investments funds. In my riding we're developing one of the first ones. It's probably the leading one in Ontario. They're working very hard to make it work, to raise the kind of capital that will be of assistance to small business.

Bill 81 is a real help to families. It's going to help keep families intact. We all realize the tremendous stress on families. Often, when their children are teenagers it's a particularly trying time, not only for the parents but also for the teenagers as they're sprouting their wings. Also,

we're living in a time when it's tough for some middle-income earners just to raise enough money for clothing and food for the table.

The child tax credit is going to recognize \$1,020 per child for each child under the age of seven. I heard the member for Fort York saying that it's not going to help at all. I beg to differ with him. I'm sure that many of those parents are going to appreciate that \$1,020 for each of their children. We're talking about not just a few families but in the neighbourhood of 210,000 families in Ontario. It's going to assist those parents in being able to maintain their jobs and help ensure that those children are going to be properly cared for. It's going to actually go further than that by reimbursing the parents for some of the cost of child care.

It's a proactive stance that we're taking in regard to this. It's going to stimulate the construction and renovation of child care spaces here in Ontario. This is the kind of legislation that demonstrates that our government is very committed: committed to the family, committed to the community and committed to people who work hard and who want the very best for the children in Ontario.

I'm pleased to see that in this bill we're also recognizing Ontarians with disabilities. We'll take a proactive approach to helping people with those disabilities by offering a tax incentive. It's looking at businesses. Even if they're not incorporated, they can receive a refundable tax credit. Bill 81 encourages businesses to employ persons with disabilities, and it recognizes disabled people's strengths and potential as contributors to Ontario and the workplace here in the province.

All in all, we have a great record as a government with tax cuts and balancing the budget. Since June 8, 1995, to be exact, we've brought in some 66 tax cuts. This bill will bring in further tax cuts to stimulate the economy here in the province. This is about demonstrating our proof that we're fulfilling the commitment we made when we came to office. We've been cutting taxes through the commercial and industrial education area, the tax rates in those classes. We're also cutting small business corporate taxes by up to half.

This year our deficit is all the way down to \$4.2 billion. The previous government was running consistently over \$10 billion, at times approaching \$14 billion and \$15 billion per year. We're talking about the deficit, not the debt. That was the level it was running at.

This bill also demonstrates our commitment to developing a strong economy, jobs and growth. It's helping to fulfill the potential of people who live in this province. We're coming with a balanced budget, lower taxes and spending within our means. It's the elimination of needless barriers to growth, innovation and initiative. It's going to stimulate employment opportunities for all Ontarians.

In summary about this bill, we have been listening as a government to the people of Ontario and we're responding to their concerns. It's a real joy to be part of a government that listens, that consults.

It's interesting to see some of the figures on our government compared to the two previous governments

regarding how much consulting has been going on. In the first session our government sat 361 days and passed 89 bills, the NDP sat 385 days in total and passed 163 bills, while the Liberals sat 297 days and passed 183 bills.

If we look at the length of time for something like second readings, in the first session we spent four hours and 50 minutes, the NDP spent one hour and 28 minutes, while the Liberals only spent one hour and eight minutes.

If you look at third readings and how much time they actually spent, the PCs spent two hours and 10 minutes, the NDP spent 48 minutes and the Liberals, on third readings in the first session, spent all of seven minutes. That's the kind of listening, that's the kind of consultation the Liberals were doing.

When they went out on the road on hearings, our government spent 773 hours and 29 minutes, the NDP were close behind with 645 hours, while the Liberals came in at only 349 hours and 45 minutes, less than half the time this government has been spending out on the road listening and consulting with the people of Ontario, yet we hear Liberals standing and criticizing us for not enough consultation.

It's a pleasure for me to be able to speak on Bill 81, a bill that's a result of listening to the people of Ontario, a bill about cutting taxes and ensuring we get the budget balanced here in Ontario.

The Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I want to comment on the member for Northumberland's remarks. The problem with a lot of the members of the Conservative government is that they have a different understanding of the word "listen." In Bill 81 there is a major change for one of the stakeholders, the teachers' pension fund, and you never consulted with them. You arbitrarily changed their pension without asking them. That's called listening?

You think listening is spending \$47 million on one-way propaganda on television, spending millions dictating propaganda to people with their own money. You call that consultation. The people of Ontario are fed up with that. They're saying, "Stop spending our money trying to brainwash us, because we don't believe you know what you're doing."

This is another example of a bill which tries to camouflage all the reckless, unpredictable, almost demolition derby type of approach you have to government. You have no respect for people and their ability to have input. You ride roughshod over people over and over again, and in this bill you do the same thing.

This bill does very little for working families. They still have to line up to take their kids to emergency. That's what working families are worried about. They can't trust that their child or their older parent can go to hospital and get decent care. They're saying that a government that has fouled up the hospital and health system so much had better start to pay attention. All the propaganda you put on television is not going to make the people of Ontario forget what you're doing to their families, what you're doing to their hospitals, what you're doing to their schools.

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Mr Marchese: The members talk about all the good things they have done, the great things they do. I hear from a lot of people in my riding — and I've got a good mix of people in my riding — who say, "If things are as great as they claim, why are we having it so bad?" That's what they're feeling and that's what they're experiencing. People are saying, "We are working a lot more and longer for less." People in a family are working at wages that are not what they used to be. In fact, two people have to work to make the salary or wages that one person used to make 10 years ago. People are working harder and longer for less.

People are now suffering at the hands of this government as it relates to everything connected to hospitals, everything connected to the care of seniors, of families, of children in our hospital system. It shouldn't be this way. In an economy that is booming, things should be flowing a lot more smoothly, and they're not. The educational system should be flowing a lot more smoothly, and it is not.

If things are so great, why are so many people so unhappy? If the income tax is so good, why are people out there saying: "Why are all these services being cut? Why is everything unhealthy with our health care system? Why is our educational system in chaos if things are so great?" They're beginning to understand that things are not as they appear, that things are not what you want them to believe, in spite of the propaganda that's costing you millions and millions of dollars, which you decried when you were in opposition.

The opposition has barely enough time to debate these bills. We oppose it.

Mr Maves: Speaker, may I compliment you on your shoe selection for this evening.

I just want to congratulate the member for Northumberland. The member for Northumberland always adds very thoughtful contributions to any debate in this Legislature and he's done that once again tonight. The member is always very happy to stand up and talk about the record of this government, whether it be the 450,000 net new jobs that have been created since we took office or the more than 300,000 people off dependence on welfare. He's very quick to bring those points forward.

The members opposite wonder why people out there sometimes seem confused and not understanding the very positive record this government has had, not only the job creation and people off welfare but that the deficit has gone from over \$11 billion down to \$3 billion and we're moving towards a balanced budget ahead of schedule.

I can compare my own region. Back in 1993, I recall picking up a newspaper and seeing a StatsCan report pointing to 15% unemployment in the Niagara region. It was among the highest in the country at the time. Today we're at 6.7% in Niagara, one of the lowest in the country. My good friend from Hamilton, Mrs Ross, has a little bit better unemployment rate in Hamilton, due largely to the good job that she and Mr Skarica and several others in this government have done. But we're pretty proud about 6.7% and we're getting better.

One of the things my constituents have always talked to me about for the past three years is, "We like what you do and we like the direction of the government, we like the results, but you need to communicate it better." So we started to communicate to the public the true facts of what's happening in Ontario today. The members opposite don't like that. They did it, but when we do it, it seems to be a problem.

Mr Michael Brown: I want to speak just a little bit about the one section of this omnibus bill that deals with the Ontario child care supplement for working families. In this barrage of \$47 million worth of government propaganda, there is one commercial people should be listening to, and that's how to apply for this. I want to tell my constituents that this is real and it will help those working families in Algoma-Manitoulin and along the North Shore. What I should also tell them, which the ad of course omits, is that the funding for this \$140-million program is shared in this manner: \$100 million from the federal government and \$40 million from Ontario.

Mr Klees: It's about time the feds started to be concerned about that.

Mr Michael Brown: The member might say it's about time and it could be true, but all I'm saying is that that is the formula, that's what's happening. A straightforward ad would have told them that the bulk of this program is being paid from the federal treasury. Regardless of whether we want to play partisan politics or not, it is a good thing for many of the people in Algoma-Manitoulin. Contact the 800 line, contact my office, find out how to apply for this and make sure that you're eligible, because the cheque will be meaningful to you.

The second thing I would like to say to the members who are applauding and getting all excited about the great, wonderful economy in Ontario is that that may be true, and we can all speculate on what the various reasons are, but along the North Shore of Lake Huron the unemployment rate is about 15.5%. We have to do something about that, and it's time, instead of getting lots of silly rhetoric around here, that we address that problem.

The Speaker: Response, member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: It's interesting, the comments from the member for Algoma-Manitoulin and the member for Niagara Falls talking about unemployment. It brings to mind the fact that last month the figures came out in our region and they're down to 4.75%, a drop of some 4% over the last year. I had to double-check; it was hard for me to believe that we were back to 4.75% again.

It was interesting to hear the member for Fort York and some of his comments that people were complaining to him about working longer and earning less. That sounds like a bit of a contradiction when he's also complaining about our tax cuts, when we're trying to help them out and leave more money in their pockets. I was sitting here a little puzzled over that comment when I started to realize that, yes, that does make sense, because here's the federal government increasing payroll taxes — on the Canada pension plan, on unemployment insurance — and that's the reason they're taking home less.

It's hard to believe that the federal government would do that kind of thing, that the Liberals in Ottawa would rip that much money out of their pockets just to build up a fund, for whatever reason I really don't know. The only reason they have balanced their budget is because of the stimulus of the economy by the province of Ontario. I can tell you, there'd be no balanced budget in Ottawa today if the economy had not been stimulated in Ontario.

You see it every day. I'm going to see it when I'm heading home this evening. There'll be a dozen transports in a solid row going down 401. That was not happening in 1995. The transports were scattered. The trains on the CN and CP tracks are more plentiful and much longer than they were before, another indication of the economy being stimulated by things like our tax cuts, that seem to irritate the opposition to no end. I guess it's because they hadn't thought of the idea.

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The Speaker: Further debate? The member for Oakwood.

Mr Colle: This is a budget bill. Some of the other members have mentioned that this government is trying to take all the credit for all the good things that are happening in the economy. Certainly the public out there knows that no one government should take the credit, but this government will always do that. They will never share the credit, because they believe that they alone have all the power, they alone do good, they alone know best. The public is sick and tired of that attitude from this government, because the public wants a fair and honest approach.

They know that in previous years, when they had the recession in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, you couldn't put the finger on one government, such as the NDP provincially. Most objective people knew that those conditions were out of the control of the provincial government and out of the control of the federal government. They were worldwide conditions, North American conditions. The public knows better than to just scapegoat or blame one government.

This government comes along and says: "Previous governments caused the recession, they added to it, but we came along and we undid the recession. It was the Common Sense Revolutionaries that turned around this economy, despite what was happening in the United States, despite what was happening in Europe. The Common Sense Revolutionaries are better and brighter than anyone else." That's the attitude the public of Ontario is sick and tired of. That attitude has ended up almost destroying our hospitals. That's what that attitude has done, because they've been so reckless. They haven't listened to nurses, they haven't listened to patients. They just bulldozed ahead, thinking they knew best, and you see what they've done to our hospitals.

There's the record. Go to your local hospital, talk to your local doctors and nurses and find out what they've done to your hospital, if they haven't closed it. In my community they've closed the hospital, almost a new hospital, about 25 years old. This government closed it a

year ahead of schedule and, believe it or not, all of a sudden they found emergencies and crises all across Metro Toronto. This government closed six emergency departments in Toronto and they wonder why there are lineups and chaos for people seeking emergency care. They wonder. They said it was the January flu. That's what they said at the time.

This is a government that doesn't think, it acts, then tries to use television propaganda to cover up its mistakes. They spend the money that should have been going into the hospitals, basically doubling the negative impact on the community. They take the money out of the hospitals, they make the emergencies unworkable, and then instead of putting the money back in to reopen the emergencies, they spend that \$47 million on propaganda on television.

People are very upset about that. They're upset about their hospitals being destroyed by you and they're upset by the propaganda you're using to try and cover it up with their own money that you should be putting into hospitals, that you should be putting into schools. Instead, what do you do? You pay your friends in the advertising industry to put these fancy American commercials on television. They're sick and tired of you using their money to try and brainwash them. They're telling you to stop. The more you do it, the more you remind people of the havoc you've created in our hospitals, the more you remind them of the chaos you've created in their schools.

You were a government that set up a plan on this ludicrous 100-square-foot formula. You treated children based on a 100-square-foot formula. The people of Ontario said, "This is nuts. Don't treat our kids based on 100 square feet," and you saw what they did. The people of Ontario said, "Enough." They stopped you from closing down their schools. You had to put the money back into the schools. You had to back off. Your own Premier had to come here on a Friday afternoon to Toronto and beg the mayor of Toronto to let him reopen the schools and put the money back in, because the people of Toronto and all across Ontario said you went too far with your reckless approach to education and what you were doing in this province to their children.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): The biggest whiners in the province with a mayor like Mel Lastman.

Mr Colle: Mr Speaker, do I have the floor?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Carl DeFaria): Yes.

Mr Colle: Thank you.

The parents and the families in this province have seen what you've done to their children's schools. They've seen what you've done in creating the homeless problem. They've seen what you've done in creating affordable housing in this province and city, where people this winter in this city of Toronto will not find adequate housing because you walked away from your responsibility to house people in need: seniors, people with disabilities, people who are unfortunate. You've walked away from that responsibility.

All the categorical rhetoric about how great things are, driving down the highway with tractors wheel to wheel, doesn't sell to people who don't have a place to live, who

see their schools about to close and see their hospitals close. They see that as being more important than what you're trying to achieve through your television propaganda. They're saying, "Put those dollars and cents back into the schools, the hospitals and housing the poor." That's what they want to see with their money: Take care of the vulnerable because they need a helping hand and they just don't need television commercials, on which you spend all your time.

Television commercials, then, are going to also help solve the welfare problem and the workfare problem. What did they do? They spent \$180 million and wrote a blank cheque to an American consulting firm, Andersen. They basically gave them a blank cheque of \$180 million to fix the welfare problem. This is a government that prides itself on watching its dollars and cents and being tough on those welfare people, as they call them, yet Andersen Consulting, a multinational, multi-million-dollar corporation, gets \$180 million given to them scot-free. They even are allowed to submit expenses for \$1.5 million.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): No, they haven't. Check your facts over there. Liberal research strikes again.

Mr Colle: I know the minister who gave them the money is heckling over there. She wrote the cheque. I would be ashamed if I were you.

Hon Mrs Ecker: They don't have that much money. They didn't get it.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Speaker: I think you'll agree that this is in fact a point of order, because it's important for members in this Legislature to know —

Mr Michael Brown: Time.

Mr Colle: He's taking my time.

Mr Klees: — that the member misspeaks himself when he says that Andersen Consulting received \$180 million.

Mr Michael Brown: That's not a point of order.

Mr Klees: They did not, and that is a fact.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. Member for Oakwood.

Mr Colle: Can I have my time back? He took my time.

I know the member stood up to defend Andersen Consulting and the minister is trying to defend Andersen Consulting, but the people of Ontario were disgusted at seeing their hard-earned money that could have been spent on hospitals —

Mr Michael Brown: The Provincial Auditor says that.

Mr Colle: The Provincial Auditor had about 15 pages of it. I know the members didn't want to read the auditor's report, but there was money that could have been used in schools and hospitals, helping to house the elderly and the sick. Instead they wrote a cheque for \$180 million to a consulting firm that was supposed to fix the welfare problem. That's what this government's priorities are. They're into protecting people like Andersen Consulting. The bigger you are, the more they'll protect you. But if you're an elderly person who's trying to pay for your prescription drugs, they hit you with user fees. Every time

they go for a drug that they need prescribed by their doctor, they get hit by a tax.

That's what this government fails to realize, that they should spend more time protecting the elderly, who need some help. Not that they want it all the time, but when they're sick they deserve some help in hospitals. They deserve some help in paying for their medication. They don't deserve user fees, they don't deserve to be treated like second-class citizens when they go to their local hospital, and they don't want their hospitals to be closed.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Silipo: The member for Oakwood is quite correct to criticize the government for having the wrong priorities when it comes to the people of Ontario, for spending millions of dollars on what is really nothing more than partisan advertising that goes way beyond the nature of any advertising that other parties in power have ever done in the past and which is clearly of much more of a partisan nature.

I was struck by the response from across the way when he talked about the issue of Andersen Consulting. It's true, and I think we have to say this to the government, that the \$180 million hadn't all been paid out, but the question we have to ask ourselves is, what would have happened if the auditor had not reviewed that particular program? That money would have been paid out far beyond what is reasonable for the services that Andersen Consulting provided.

I'd be very happy to listen, in response to the member for Oakwood, to government members, whether it's the Minister of Community and Social Services or anybody else who wants to stand up and tell us, to this day, after the report of the auditor has come out, after all the questions we have raised and others have raised in this House, what the minister has done to recover all of those overpayments that have gone out to Andersen Consulting. She's quite quick to deal with overpayments, and she should be, with respect to the situation in the welfare system, but what about the great overpayment that was made to Andersen Consulting? How much of that has been recovered? I suspect not a great deal of it yet.

Hon Mrs Ecker: It doesn't have to be. There wasn't an overpayment that should have been recovered.

Mr Silipo: Oh, "It doesn't have to be," the minister says. It was paid far more than should have been paid. The auditor himself said that. Here's the minister today: On the one hand, she has been saying that, yes, she acknowledges the program was not the best program set up, and now she says that money does not have to be recovered. That's exactly the kind of attitude we continue to see from this government.

Mr Maves: It's always a pleasure to rise and comment on the member for Oakwood's comments. He didn't talk about Bill 81 at all, so I guess that means I don't have to either. I enjoy the member. I know right now he's on to the cheap ticket deal that the city councillors in Toronto I think have going with basketball and hockey and some of the theatres. I understand he's going to go after that, make

that a little public. That's good, and I'm glad to see him doing that.

Over the past couple of years I know that member opposite has done a few things like that, and I've really enjoyed that he would take them on, but the very reason this government finds it necessary to communicate with the public more is because of the rhetoric that member spewed earlier on in his comments, the whole idea of the \$180 million paid to Andersen Consulting. He was corrected by the parliamentary assistant for that ministry. That indeed wasn't spent.

The very honourable member for Dovercourt, whom I have a great deal of respect for in this Legislature, got up and clarified that indeed the \$180 million wasn't paid out, yet the member for Oakwood continually stands up and uses the figure, and he knows it's not true. That's why people at home get confused and that's why people at home say, "What's really happening?" When you go out on the hustings and you go door to door and you talk to people they say, "Why don't you communicate more, tell us more of what's happening, explain what's happening in health care, explain what's happening in education?"

That's exactly what this government is doing, and we're not alone. Don't anyone ever think that we're alone. The NDP government before us and the Liberals before them all spent a heck of a lot of more money on advertising than this government ever has. It's important to communicate with the public.

The members opposite are upset because they think that we shouldn't communicate what's happening, that we should let them continue to spew rhetoric forward and let the public just believe in that rhetoric, but things need to be clarified. The public is owed that type of communication.

Mr Bradley: I'm surprised to hear the remarks of my friend from Niagara Falls about the advertising, because it's simply indefensible. The government members who say nothing are better off, because when you think of it, if you want to know what people are about, you would have said, "Mike Harris wanted to be about cutting and about getting rid of any frivolous spending," and he has been the one who has engaged in the worst orgy of partisan political advertising I've ever witnessed in this province.

The members keep bringing forward information which is simply not true, not correct, because what you don't consider is that when we talk about the \$50 million you're spending, we don't count your advertising outside the country for the purposes of tourism, we don't count how much you're spending on tenders that you must put in the paper, or committee hearings and things of that nature. That's what you put in when you talk about the other parties. We do not count that. We're dealing only with what we consider to be, and listen, a lot of Tories consider to be, a frivolous waste of taxpayers' money.

You already have lots of money in your coffers. You've catered your policies to the richest and most wealthy people in this province. They have paid back many times by attending your fundraisers. I understand that. Your party has millions of dollars to spend, and yet you're not

content with that; you're taking taxpayers' dollars, every penny of that, to spend on it.

The last thing I mention is that I didn't know about this article in *Eye* magazine when I was talking about why the province won't enter into the suit. But here's the province of Ontario: It will not enter the suit, along with the government of British Columbia, against the major tobacco companies. There's somebody you could really take on. That's somebody big and that's somebody tough. I'd like to see you bully them around instead of the small people.

Mr Klees: I too have a great deal of respect for the member for Oakwood. Typically, when he debates in this place, he brings forward, with some clarity, issues that relate to the legislation before the House, which he failed to do this time, and he typically is very objective. We will often not have the same view on issues, but he will, on most occasions at least, represent the issue fairly. He didn't do that, in my opinion, in the debate this evening.

He continued to misrepresent numbers and figures that quite honestly, as my colleague just indicated, are the very reason why our government has no choice but to communicate effectively with the people in this province, to let them know in no uncertain terms what this government is doing, to ensure they know that the funding formula for education is fairer today than it has ever been in the history of Ontario; to let them know there is more being spent, and more effectively and more efficiently, on health care than ever before in the history of this province; to let them know there are more low-income people in Ontario today who qualify for support under the Ontario drug program than ever before in the history of Ontario; to let them know that for the first time in 10 years this government has announced in Ontario new long-term-care beds. The previous governments failed to do any of that, and it's about time that the people of Ontario —

Mr Bradley: That's fine, nothing wrong with that. This is the place to do it.

Mr Klees: Yes, and we'll do much more of that. We have a responsibility to advise the people of Ontario what is happening in this province and how the finances of this province are being dealt with. They're being dealt with efficiently, effectively and honestly, which is much more than I can say about the previous two governments.

The Acting Speaker: A reply, the member for Oakwood.

Mr Colle: I want to thank the members for Dovercourt, Niagara, St Catharines and York-Mackenzie for their comments; it certainly does add to the debate.

It's important for the public to understand that here we have government members complaining about the fact they can't get their message across. Here are the government members who have the power and the millions of all their ministries behind them, all the thousands of ministry staff and political staff they have at their fingertips, and they're complaining they can't get their message across.

They are asking for sympathy, and there they are —

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): You complain when we advertise — Liberal flip-flop.

Mr Colle: There they are, the member for Scarborough East crying in his seat because he can't communicate, that he needs more money, and the problem is that they want the taxpayers' money for more political propaganda. They just don't understand that the public is saying: "You've got enough employees in the ministry in your control, you've got all those millions you spend with your ministries, but don't spend our taxpayers' dollars to tell us that our health care is so good and our education is so good, because we see something different when we enter our hospitals and we see something different when we visit our local school."

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You can't pull the wool over the eyes of the people of Ontario. They're not going to take your complaints about the fact you don't have enough ministry officials and enough money at your disposal to communicate. You've got more than enough, more than anybody else has ever had. You've got powerful vehicles and you don't need the taxpayers' money that should be in the schools, in the hospitals and in the hands of the seniors who need the money; it shouldn't be in your hands. You've got enough money there.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Silipo: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this bill, even for the short 10 minutes that are available.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Will you be sharing your time?

Mr Silipo: I won't be sharing my time with anybody at this point. I think 10 minutes I can manage. I don't tend to want to speak for a long time on things unless I think I have something to say. Quite frankly, 10 minutes on this is probably either too much or will never be enough.

This is one of those bills that comes out of the budget that has a whole array of pieces in it, and that in itself is not unusual. It's not something to be critical of, the fact that a bill has changes that incorporate a number of the measures that the government put forward in its budget bill. So I'm not going to criticize them for having in this bill changes to a number of different pieces of legislation. I think there are 11 or 12 different parts in the bill. That is not something that I want to particularly criticize.

What I have some criticism of the government on — there are a couple of pieces in the bill that I actually support and I want to be clear in my comments on that as well. Overall, I would say that one of the things I find troubling with this legislation, as I unfortunately find with most pieces of legislation that the Mike Harris government brings forward, is that it is not particularly well thought out. They come too far into the legislative process with a view and an attitude that says: "We have to get this done. We have to get this passed because the time lines are upon us. The legislative session is about to end." We'll be here another two weeks, with extended sittings even beyond the 9:30 time that we are sitting to tonight, to midnight for the next two weeks, to try to deal with the rest of the business that the government wants to set forward.

This is a bill that arises out of the budget, the budget that I want to remind members was presented last spring, so there were lots of opportunities and there was lots of time between then and now for the government to have come forward with these changes. Instead, what they've done is not introduced this bill until just a few days ago, earlier this month, and then we again see this attitude that we have seen all too often from the government where they say, "We have to get this done."

Because it's a budget bill, they of course don't say the real reason, which I think more and more is becoming the reason: that we may not come back as a Legislative Assembly after we break for Christmas. We may very well be into a provincial election in the early spring, and I'm not complaining about that. I'm actually quite eager for that to happen, the sooner the better, I say, but that is the real reason why the government is trying to clean up all the pieces of legislation they want to get done. In that rush, in that hurry they are again, as they have done in the past — dare I mention the property tax situation? — making mistakes.

One classic example we have is what they are doing with respect to part XI of the bill. Part XI incorporates into this piece of legislation changes to the Teachers' Pension Act that come about as a result of an agreement that the Ontario Teachers' Federation and the government made. There is a partnership agreement that governs the teachers' pension plan across the province and they have come to an agreement about how to deal with the unfunded liability, because there's been an actuarial surplus accumulating for the last few years. There have been arrangements made for some of that money to be used to help pay for early retirement of teachers and some of that to be used by the government in other ways.

The government is now coming forward and saying that they want to incorporate those provisions into the legislation, which seems to make sense. As an objective, the teachers' federation doesn't have any particular problems with that. However, as I said earlier, this is supposed to be a partnership agreement between the teachers' federation and the government of the day. What do we find when the teachers' federation looks at this? First of all, as we understand it, they weren't told until a few days before the legislation was going to be introduced that this was even being contemplated. They were allowed to see in private, I gather, some of the proposals and some of the changes. They were not given an opportunity to study those and respond. They did not really have an opportunity to deal in any significant way with looking at the changes until after the legislation was introduced which, as I say, only happened days ago.

Now they find themselves in a situation where they are saying: "We don't disagree with the intent here, but we think the government may be causing problems by what you are actually putting into this legislation, because you may be first of all going far beyond where you need to go. By putting some of these things into legislation, you are removing some of the flexibility that we need and want to have to continue in the future to negotiate some of these

things and discuss these things in the partnership context in which they should happen."

They are saying to the government, "Take out this part of the bill, because you don't need to pass these changes now to put in place the effect of the agreement that was reached." I don't know what the government is going to do, but I'll be interested to see if they at least on this piece understand and acknowledge that in their rush to get this piece of legislation through, by waiting and waiting and then introducing it at the last moment and saying, "We've got to get this through before the end of December" — this is another example of what happens when legislation is dealt with in this way. You don't make good decisions, you make bad decisions, and you force bad decisions on citizens across the province, in this case on the teachers of the province, but consequentially on other citizens in the province.

That is the attitude we have seen far too often from this government. I was at a meeting last night and somebody was commenting on the Common Sense Revolution as we were talking about the impending school closures and what is happening there. Let me say to the government that despite the changes they've announced, they haven't fooled anyone. Those changes are (a) permanent and (b) long-lasting, beyond the next election. In fact, parents are still very worried about what is going to happen in future to their schools and their children's education.

The point I wanted to bring to members' attention tonight was that somebody was commenting about the Common Sense Revolution, which has been the catchphrase the Harris government used into the election and since the election. This parent said: "You know, what I find striking about the Common Sense Revolution is that there has been a lot of revolution. But in that revolution, I haven't found a lot of common sense." That summed it up for me so well in terms of the attitude and the actions of this government of just bulldozing ahead, believing that they above all are right, that nobody else had any good advice to give them, and then finding themselves in a situation where time after time they had to come back to this House and admit — although of course they never actually admitted it; they never actually said, "We made a mistake." But that is what happened time after time, whether it was on the property tax issue or many other issues.

When I look at the content of this bill, there are a couple of provisions that I think make sense; for example, the piece that's in here dealing with the Estate Administration Tax Act and changes in the Estates Act. I agree wholeheartedly with why the government is doing this and with the government doing this. I know some members of the House, some Liberal members and others, have been critical of the government for in effect enacting into law legislation that says all the fees that have been charged dealing with estates —

Mr Bradley: They criticized you for the rates.

Mr Silipo: It's not a question of criticizing us for the rates, because this is not about the increases in those rates. The court decision — I particularly wanted to pursue this

in the briefing, which I thank the ministry officials for providing. The issue here is not the question of whether these fees have been raised over the years, because all parties in government have raised these fees at one point or another.

The issue is that the fees as charged, in all their amounts, from the original amounts of 1950 to the most recent amounts charged today under the current government, have been found to be unconstitutional for the very important reason that the highest court of the land has said that you cannot impose what they believe is a tax — and they have deemed this to be a tax because it's something that goes beyond simply recovering the cost of the service, therefore they define that as a tax — by regulation. You have to impose that by an act of the Parliament of Ontario. So we have here in this legislation a piece that enables and makes legal all those changes and all those fees that were charged. I think that's the most sensible way to go.

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I could raise the question here, and I will only briefly, about what is going to happen to other decisions the government has made with respect to, for example, the issue of the whole property tax system as it applies to education. I know that issue is before the courts. We'll be quite interested to see what comes out of that morass as the court tries to deal with that.

If time permitted, I'd be happy to talk about some of the other provisions in here, particularly the issue of the child tax credit. I will be eager to see the government finally spend some money in this area. As much as I would want them to go even further than they are doing here, I'm looking forward to them at least finally spending some money in this area, after three different attempts at pretending to spend money in this area and not in fact spending very much. Maybe with this particular change we will actually see some money in the hands of parents who need it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to follow the member for Dovercourt. I want to drive the message home very clearly that Bill 81 is an act to implement tax credits. Really, it's reducing taxes.

This is a technical bill. There are 12 parts to it. There are measures in here for community small business investment funds — very important to small business. There are Corporations Tax Act changes in part III — very important. We're looking at the taxes to Ontario computer animation and special effects, a growth industry where we're providing the right kind of incentives for the creation of high-tech jobs. The Employer Health Tax Act changes are also important for small business. It's accelerating the exemption from paying the Liberal employer health tax.

Clearly, Mr Harris is on the record as being the Taxfighter. He always has been. This bill is further proof that this government is not just talking; we're acting.

There are changes to the income tax. The member for Dovercourt mentioned it. It deserves some attention here. The Ontario child care supplement comes into effect — I

think it's important here that you listen. An application will be made by eligible participants to receive payments directly from the province of up to \$85 a month for children under seven years of age, a very important measure for the hard-working people. Arguably, Mr Silipo is saying, they are overtaxed. This is a way of giving the tax back to a hard-working low-income group.

There's another part in here, the Pension Benefits Act, section IX. Some of the long-time members in here will know this may have some provisions for them in the future, as they try to access their pension fund.

There are some corrections here to the Teachers' Pension Act. They've been running a considerable surplus and there have been discussions on that since the Liberals were in government.

There's important recognition of the Tobacco Tax Act. In that small section there's an ability for those people who are illegal traders in tobacco to be fined very heavily.

The Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: When I was listening to the member for Dovercourt, he was being very moderate tonight. The point I was making about the probate fees was that I can well recall that when the government of which you were a part increased the probate fees substantially in 1992, they were very critical. Mike Harris led the charge, and the person who is sitting in the Speaker's chair at the present time was very critical on that particular occasion. What I find out now, what the Speaker would be perturbed about, is that Mike Harris is not only confirming those fees for that period of time but he's going to maintain those fees. He's going to continue to charge what he thought was an exorbitant rate for probate fees, and fees, as we know, are taxes.

The member appropriately pointed out as well that making tax decisions by regulation, behind closed doors, is not going to be suitable. He said the education tax, which you now control and levy, is not something debated before this House but is decided in the backrooms, where the Premier and his advisers and members of cabinet are there to deliberate. The elected representatives of the people on all sides of the House do not have an opportunity to do that.

The member, in 10 minutes, didn't have time, but I was wondering if he would comment on this article that was in Eye magazine. It says: "Will Ontario join the big tobacco lawsuits? Don't hold your breath." I had heard the member for Simcoe Centre, who always points the finger somewhere else, say, "Why doesn't the federal government do something?" Here's an opportunity right here, as it mentions, to join the suit against the tobacco companies, but nobody over there wants to do it.

Mr Maves: It's always a pleasure to rise and speak to the comments made by the member for Dovercourt. I said he was an honourable member in my previous two-minute discussion and I would repeat that.

Just a juxtaposition between himself and the Liberal Party: When he talks about the correction of the problem with the probate fees in the legislation, he rightly says it's

the proper thing to do. When we first brought it in and when the courts ruled that probate fees through regulations were inappropriate, the province, after charging those for 30 or 40 years now, was in a situation where we could have owed billions of dollars to people going back into the 1950s. The members from the Liberal Party wanted to say: "This is a new tax. Isn't this terrible, billions and billions of dollars." Rightly, tonight the member for Dovercourt stands up, explains the situation with the probate fees and the tax, and then says it's the proper thing to do. It's always a pleasure to get up when someone has integrity like that, instead of trying to fool the public and trick the people, like the Liberal Party seems to want to do. Members from the NDP are at least straightforward.

He talked about us being a little bit bullish in enacting our Common Sense Revolution, and we were. We got elected on a mandate. We'd had that platform out for over a year and, yes, we did want to repeal some of the taxes that the NDP had brought in and the job quotas and the taxes that the Liberals had brought in before them. We ran on that and, yes, we wanted to implement those and we did go ahead and implement those, very much like the NDP did when they were in office, and the Liberals, when they brought in all kinds of huge budgets with huge deficits and really didn't pay enough attention to a lot of people in the business community, who said: "That's going to kill jobs. That's going to kill the economy." We reversed that because we think they went completely in the wrong direction.

The Speaker: I'd like, more importantly, to note that not only is the member for Middlesex in the government members' gallery, but the member for Middlesex's parents are in the government members' gallery. Welcome.

Questions and comments?

Mr Colle: Just commenting on the member for Dovercourt's speech, I think he raised a very interesting point about the taxation and the constitutionality of imposing fees without any kind of legislative debate. As you know, one of the things this government did on Bill 160 was quite unprecedented. They took the power to tax for education purposes into the backroom, so there's no debate, no questioning of how high the tax rate should be, what it should be, and the public has no input into setting that rate. The government has stopped any questioning of that tax and they do it completely without any input.

This is why I think the court ruled that a probate fee was a tax and it should be a tax. That was the court ruling. It will be very interesting to see down the road what happens when they look at this government's removal of the right of the public to have any hearing on millions and billions of dollars they're setting on to property taxpayers for education purposes without any scrutiny whatsoever.

This is an unprecedented attempt by this government to cut off any debate on their authority to tax, and this is essentially one of the most horrendous things about the way this government works. It takes major functions that traditionally have been part of the give and take of the

public process and they arbitrarily hide them behind closed doors, so now you don't know who's setting the tax rate and you can't question them. That is why I think it's important for the public to be aware of what's in all these bills, including Bill 81.

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The Speaker: Response, member for Dovercourt.

Mr Silipo: As always, I accept both accolades and reprimands whenever I speak in this place, as we all should.

I just want to say in response, particularly to one of the comments made by one of the government members with respect to Mike Harris as the Taxfighter, maybe in your rhetorical dreams, to the members of the government, because Mike Harris, if he ever believed in it, seems to have forgotten what that actually meant.

I remember the days, Speaker, and I know you remember them well, when Mike Harris used to go around the province reminding people and talking to people about the fact that there was only one taxpayer. What he himself said at the time that meant was, whether you called them taxes, whether you called them user fees, whatever tag you put on them, they were taxes. If you took money out of the pockets of people, they were taxes.

All of a sudden Mike Harris gets in government, and what does he do? Yes, he proceeds with the 30% income tax cut which provides a tax cut for the wealthiest citizens in the province in terms of the benefit, but what does he also do in order to partially find the money to pay for that tax cut? He raises property taxes, he raises tuition fees, he raises the drug benefit copayment fees, all of those things and many more that I could mention that Mike Harris, by his own definition, says are taxes.

There goes the Taxfighter. The Taxfighter is lowering taxes for the wealthiest citizens in this province and he's increasing taxes for Ontarians of low-income and middle-income family groupings. That's what the Mike Harris government is all about. It's about shifting money and power from all of us into the hands of those few Ontarians who are already well off and quite frankly don't need those tax cuts.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Spina: Well done, Speaker. It's getting a little late and sometimes we get a little punchy. Sometimes we have to remind the opposition that you all live in a glass house, folks, so don't start throwing rocks, because you've been there before and you didn't do the job. Now we are. You don't like it, do you?

I'm going to speak to this beel — this bill.

Mr Silipo: Beel or bill?

Mr Spina: It's a bill.

Mr Shea: Go easy, I'm sitting in front of you.

Mr Spina: Sorry, Speaker. I have more help than I need.

I want to focus on two specific elements: the greater access to capital for small business and support for small, growing firms for job creation in the millennium. This is of particular interest to me simply because, as many of you know, I was the parliamentary assistant for small

business and I was involved in a program, along with now Minister Sampson, which was co-chairing a committee on the access to capital. Some of the recommendations that we brought forward we're very pleased to see have been carried through in the last budget and into this bill.

This bill supports job creation, as my colleagues have indicated, by reducing the payroll tax burden, and that phase-in of the \$400,000 EHT exemption is now being accelerated by increasing the exemption in 1998 from \$300,000 to \$350,000 for employers and self-employed individuals. In 1999, the tax on self-employed individuals will be completely eliminated and we are pleased that this measure was actually enacted with Bill 47 in 1996.

Let's get to the access to investment capital for small business. In 1997, we introduced the community small business investment fund program, the CSBIF, because government loves acronyms — and we like to call the opposition LWs or NDPWs, you know, Liberal whiners, NDP whiners.

This is a CSBIF program to promote greater access to investment capital for growing businesses with \$1 million or less in assets. Incentives were provided to encourage the labour-sponsored investment funds and financial institutions to participate in this initiative. To further expand the pool available for investment capital for corporations, trusts and pension funds, they will also be eligible to invest in the CSBIF but they will not receive an incentive.

The deadline for registering one of these funds and the investment period during which an investor can contribute to the fund is extended from December 31 of this year to December 31, 1999. If an LSIF set aside funds for investment before May 5, 1998, then that period is being extended through to December of this year.

There are a few other technical amendments that are being added to that, but I'd rather move on to talk to some of the highlights on this. I agree with one of the opposition members — I believe it was the member for Dovercourt — who said if you can't make your point in 10 minutes, then you shouldn't be up speaking. I agree with him.

I want to talk for a moment about the LSIFs, the labour-sponsored investment funds. The bill will implement changes that were announced in September of this year to support the role of LSIFs in providing venture capital to small and medium-sized businesses. Frankly, I'm not sure it goes far enough. I'd prefer a little more independence for the community-sponsored investment funds. Nevertheless, at least we've had the opportunity to implement them and carry them forward under the wing of the LSIFs.

This bill would enact the February 19, 1998, announcement stating that individuals affected by the ice storm in eastern Ontario in January of this year would have an extra month, to the end of March 1998, to invest in an LSIF, and they can claim an RRSP deduction for the 1997 tax year.

Now let's talk about encouraging job creation for the new millennium. To encourage job creation and growth in high-technology, knowledge-based industries, this bill proposes tax incentives to support the interactive digital

media, sound recording, computer animation and special effects industries. The neat thing is that these initiatives will help businesses in these industries grow and contribute to the development of long-term, internationally viable Ontario industries with jobs for the future.

This is of particular interest in my riding, because we all know that Sheridan College has gained a worldwide reputation for computer animation and in fact recently received some substantial contracts to do work for probably the leader in computer animation in the world, Disney. This just augments the whole process to expand jobs for these young graduates coming out of Sheridan College. It doesn't just expand it for these graduates to get jobs; it expands the opportunity for them to get jobs in Canada, and we won't experience that brain drain for them to go down south.

Mr Young: It's in my riding.

Mr Maves: Do you want to share your time?

Mr Spina: I apparently have to share my time with the member for Halton Centre.

Anyway, I want to talk about the Ontario interactive digital media tax credit. This proposes a new 20% refundable tax credit to corporations for qualifying Ontario labour expenditures incurred to create interactive digital media products in Ontario.

In the 1998 budget, Minister Eves announced that qualifying corporations would be Canadian corporations with revenues no greater than \$10 million and total assets no greater than \$5 million. As a result of those consultations, the incentives will be expanded to include corporations with revenues of up to \$20 million and total assets of up to \$10 million. That really gives smaller businesses a great boost.

The enrichment of the computer animation and special effects tax credit eliminates the annual tax credit maximum of \$500,000 per associated group of corporations and extends the credit to OCASE television productions of under 30 minutes.

There are a number of elements to this particular bill, and I'm pleased that it addresses a number of different areas. It addresses the issues that my colleagues have spoken about, in particular the areas of assistance and accessible child care for working families with children, help for people with disabilities to get jobs, and overall a fairer tax system. I say to the members that there are a number of elements in this particular act that are truly beneficial to the incentive for business to start up, to grow and to expand in Ontario. That's the critical element that we are trying to develop here: to create jobs.

The previous governments had a philosophy that if it moved they taxed it, if it still moved they kept taxing it, if it still moved they regulated it, and when it stopped moving they subsidized it. That's what we are trying to end. We talked about the endless cycle in welfare. This was the endless cycle in government functioning.

I'm getting close to my time, so I'll wind up my comments and allow people to make their comments if they so choose.

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The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bradley: The member for Brampton may be surprised by this: I want to compliment him on his speech. It's because the member delivered what I consider to be an appropriate speech on the bill. He got a little bit of a shot in at the end, and that's fine. He didn't spend his time, as I've heard some other members do, ranting about the federal government. He didn't spend his time ranting about other parties. He didn't blame municipalities. He talked about the provisions of the bill. He's a government member and he's proud of the provisions of the bill.

Once in a while I like to put a compliment in. I thought the member delivered, on this particular bill, the kind of speech that should be delivered, and I want him to know that. I don't necessarily agree with all the content, but that, to me, is the kind of speech I like to see. It was a fair-minded one, a positive message and things of that nature.

Having said that, I want the member to explain to me, because I know he'll want to do that, why it was that the Premier, who was so very critical of the probate fees charged by the previous NDP government, decided to maintain it. I think you said you were parliamentary assistant at the time and you have some inside information on this. I'm wondering if the member knows why, instead of reducing the fee down to where it was even when the previous Conservative government was in, the member decided to have his Premier raise that fee to where it is now. I think that's a legitimate question and he may be able to help me out with that because, as I say, he has the inside access — not the same inside access as the whiz kids, but he does have some inside access, and I look forward to that.

Anyway, I want to compliment him. I liked his speech tonight.

Mr Silipo: I wasn't sure whether we'd get a chance to comment on the speech from the member for Brampton North. Like the member for St Catharines, I too would like to compliment him on his speech. I find that whenever I'm in the House with the member for Brampton North, he tends to leave some of his more voracious attacks for late night sittings, and in this case he chose to do them on the sidelines, not even during rebuttals when he was talking earlier. But his speech was in fact on the issues, on the bill. I think he's quite right to want to claim credit for some of the tax credits that are in this bill, which I'm sure will be helpful.

As I had the chance to indicate earlier, there are some other provisions of this bill that are not as well thought out. I hope the member will apply and encourage his colleagues to apply the same kind of approach they used in the pieces he talked about, the various business tax credits, and make sure they deal with, for example, the concerns of the Ontario Teachers' Federation; that they take out the provisions that don't make sense in this bill, that could use further study, that could use further consultation. I hope the same kind of common sense that the government purports to have will be used in dealing with this and other problems in this legislation.

Mr O'Toole: I too would like to add my praise to the member for Brampton North for doing a remarkable job, clearly one of the most competent and capable members who's graced this House and who is parliamentary assistant in a number of roles.

I have to say also that I am going to seek some clarification on where exactly Sheridan College is. Is it in Halton Centre or is it in Brampton North? I think that was brought up. It wasn't left very clear for the members.

I'd also put on record that the member for St Catharines and the member for Dovercourt seem to be accepting the idea of a tax cut. They were complimentary in a personal sense, but I think your arguments were so well put that they were supportive of it. Clearly, tax cuts do equal jobs. I think you explained that in somewhat technical detail when it came to the aspects of the new technology industries. I served on the access to capital committee with the member for Brampton North, and I know there was a lot of work done.

In conclusion, for real people, that's each and every one of us, there were two important things: the child tax credit aspect and the accessibility issues, where there is funding from the province for people with special needs to find their way into the workplace.

There's no one here from any party who wouldn't want to do more for that, and certainly those tax credits for the corporations of I think up to \$50,000 are important steps as part of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It's part of the rollout of that whole initiative on the part of the government to do something for accessibility issues.

I'd like to thank the member for Brampton North for explaining the details and for the wonderful, insightful comments he made here tonight.

Mr Michael Brown: I also quite enjoyed the speech by my friend from Brampton North. I find it a little difficult, though, to understand how the government can move the former probate fee into an inheritance tax, one they violently opposed back when the New Democratic

Party government increased, actually tripled, the probate fee.

One of the issues around that, members should know, is that in the court ruling, which was brought by some Ontario residents and eventually affected every province in the country with the exception of Quebec, the interesting thing was that one of the tests was that there needed to be a relationship between the cost of the service and the revenue that was brought in. In other words, if it was just covering the cost of providing the service, you could call it a fee and apparently it would likely be all right. This, of course, was not a fee; the court ruled it was not basically because it was really a revenue grab and therefore needed the assent of the Legislature because it was, in the definition, a tax.

What I find quite amazing and quite astounding, and I'm sure my friend from Brampton North will want to talk about this, is how his Premier, who was totally opposed to this fee when he was in opposition, who didn't want it tripled and who thought the New Democratic Party government was doing something wrong when they did that, decides immediately after a court ruling, "Well, it's okay if it's another three-letter word; it's a tax, I'll make it a tax."

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Spina: I have only a couple of comments on the question why we are not reducing the probate fee. What assets would you like us to sell off to be able to pay for what the last government implemented? I'll give you that question.

On the other hand, I just want to thank all of the members for complimenting me on sticking to the bill. We'll try to do it again in the future.

The Speaker: It now being past 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned till 1:30 of the clock on Monday, and we're there till midnight.

The House adjourned at 2139.

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Eglinton	Saunderson, William (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
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Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président		
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)		
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)		
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)		

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Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Sault Ste Marie /	
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Nickel Belt	Morin, Blain K. (NDP)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Norfolk	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Northumberland	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Oakville South / -Sud	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oakwood	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oriole	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Oshawa	Patten, Richard (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)		Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa East / -Est	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa-Rideau	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury East / -Est	Ramsay, David (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	Cullen, Alex (ND)	Timiskaming	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
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Oxford	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		Kormos, Peter (ND)
Parkdale	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Waterloo North / -Nord	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Parry Sound	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Welland-Thorold	Doyle, Ed (PC)
	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wellington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Perth	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Peterborough		Wentworth North / -Nord	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Port Arthur	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Willowdale	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prescott and Russell /			Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Prescott et Russell			Duncan, Dwight (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox-			Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
South Hastings /			Parker, John L. (PC)
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	Conway, Sean G. (L)		
Renfrew North / -Nord	Churley, Marilyn (ND)		
Riverdale			
S-D-G & East Grenville /	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	York East / -Est	
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	Bradley, James J. (L)		
St Andrew-St Patrick	Froese, Tom (PC)	York-Mackenzie	
	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Yorkview	
St Catharines		York South / -Sud	
St Catharines-Brock			
St George-St David			

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 7 December 1998

Lundi 7 décembre 1998

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 December 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 décembre 1998

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WINDSOR GOODFELLOWS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Today I rise to pay tribute to the Windsor Goodfellows, who this past weekend had their annual newspaper drive, which is the major fund-raising drive they do throughout the year.

Today we hear more stories about the rising incidence of child poverty. The Windsor Goodfellows started in 1910. It was originally the old newspaper boys. They sell this newspaper throughout our community to raise money, principally for their food bank and for shoes and boots for children in school.

The Goodfellows do remarkable work. At Christmastime alone this year they will distribute more than 5,000 food baskets. Those food baskets are also available throughout the rest of the year.

Many other organizations in our community contribute to help the Goodfellows. More than 700 volunteers help that food bank operate and the food distribution system work at Christmastime and throughout the year. The Canadian Auto Workers and a number of other organizations in our community help make this event a great success every year.

I was pleased again this year to join with the Goodfellows in this important drive. At a time, as I say, when the incidence of child poverty, of hunger and of homelessness, in every community throughout this province, continues to grow, communities like mine in Windsor are truly blessed to have the Windsor Goodfellows organization there to help them throughout the year.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): The Toronto Disaster Relief Committee is having a trial tomorrow, and it's the homeless people versus the governments of Ontario and Canada.

"The accused stand charged:

"That they, the said governments of Canada and of Ontario, in Toronto and in Ottawa, between the first day of January, 1993, and the seventh day of December, 1998, inclusive, enacted legislation and adopted policies that resulted in decreased availability of affordable and supportive housing and created increased homelessness,

and thereby contravened paragraph 1 of article II of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Political Rights.

"And further, that they, the said governments of Canada and of Ontario, in Toronto and in Ottawa, between the first day of January, 1993, and the seventh day of December, 1998, inclusive, failed to take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of the right of everyone to adequate housing, contrary to paragraph 1 of article II of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Political Rights....

"And further, that the said government of Ontario, between the first day of January, 1996, and the seventh day of December, 1998, inclusive, cut payments for social assistance to a level below that required to maintain an adequate standard of living, contrary to paragraph 1 of article II of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights."

Everybody is invited to hear this trial. It will be tomorrow morning at 10 at All Saints Church, 215 Dundas Street East, where they will be talking about remedies, a response plan and an elimination plan. We invite everybody to come.

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to once again tell the members of the assembly about the good things happening in the riding of Perth.

The final numbers for the Stratford Festival are in and they confirm that the 46th season, which concluded on November 8, was the most successful season ever. The six-month season, encompassing a total of 585 performances of 12 productions in three theatres, earned a gross box office revenue of \$23,591,730, the highest in the festival's history.

Attendance was up nearly 20,000 over last year, with the total attendance for the season being 523,015.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the people who worked so diligently to ensure the festival's success this year. I believe that Antoni, the general manager for the theatre, summed it up nicely when he said of the Director, "Richard Monette has given us one more stellar season, and...we look forward to another enlightening, entertainment and record-breaking season in 1999."

The 1999 season will run from May 4 to November 7, 1999.

There's no better indication that Ontario is once again on the right track than success stories like this from the riding of Perth. As the representative for the riding of Perth, I am happy to be part of a government that made these things possible.

CHILD POVERTY

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Metro Campaign 2000, a Toronto-based group, released some very alarming statistics about children, specifically children in poverty: More than one in three city of Toronto children under the age of 12 are living in poverty, 37% of Toronto's children; the total number of children is 135,735, an increase of 66% since the beginning of the decade; 1,360 children are living in Toronto's homeless shelters.

These statistics are alarming, and what's worse, we have a minister responsible for children in this House who refuses to answer questions that are placed to her regarding children in Ontario. Here we have a minister collecting a cabinet minister's wage and refusing to answer questions about children.

The questions we have for the Ontario government is: Who is looking after Ontario's children? Who is looking after those specifically who are in need?

We want answers from the government. We don't want to see you put off responsibilities to municipalities and blame the feds. Look at programs you used to deliver but you've cut back without looking at the kind of effect that would have on children. Food bank use is astronomical.

We hope these kinds of statistics will make the government realize that children are our number one concern.

1340

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The Sault Ste Marie North Planning Board, which does land use planning and development approvals in the 32 unorganized communities north of Sault Ste Marie to Montreal River harbour for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, will not receive enough funding to remain in operation much beyond the end of 1999. The minister has informed the planning board that provincial funding will not be provided for the board's operations beyond March 2000. The board will have to sunset its operations and wind down, providing severances to staff in 1999.

The Sault North Planning Board was established by the then Minister of Municipal Affairs in the mid-1970s to bring some order to land use planning and development because of the confusion, poor planning and housing and pollution problems in the area north of Sault Ste Marie that had plagued all of the unorganized communities along Highway 17 from Heyden through Goulais River, Batchawana to Montreal River, including Searchmont. The board is responsible to the minister and receives all of its funding for administration from the provincial government.

Apparently the current Conservative government is prepared to see the demise of good planning in the region and let the area revert to the development free-for-all of the 1960s and early 1970s with all the grave housing and environmental problems that resulted at that time. I call on the minister to provide the funding beyond 2000.

PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I rise today on a matter of utmost importance to the residents of Mississauga East: the unbearable noise generated by low-flying airplanes using the north-south runways at Lester B. Pearson airport.

Residents of my riding living east of Dixie, north of Burnhamthorpe in the Rockwood community face daily noise attacks that have been described by some residents as being like living in a war-torn region and by others as living in hell. Their homes vibrate; their alarms go on and off; their TV and electronic equipment breaks down; their property values are in a downward spiral; their babies cry non-stop; their mental and physical health are under extreme stress; their sense of security in their homes is gone.

When will the federal Liberal government learn that it cannot treat taxpayers, homeowners and residents of Mississauga East with such utmost disrespect and disregard for their concerns, and when will the federal Liberal government listen to the appeals of residents and enforce strict restrictions in the use of the north-south runways for use only on an emergency basis?

NURSING STAFF

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Nurses help provide quality to our health care system. Study after study has proven universally that with the involvement of nurses health care is enhanced. The latest US study published in the journal called *Image* provides us with some very interesting data which I hope the Harris government will listen to and learn from.

It says, first, surgical patients in hospitals with more nurses were less likely to get infections, pneumonia and other complications from their surgery; second, the chances of developing other lung-related problems and blood clots also dropped with extra nurses; third, an extra hour of nursing attention per surgical unit patient each day cut the risk of the patient getting a urinary tract infection by nearly 10% and the risk of pneumonia by 8%.

It is no small wonder that doctors, patients and the public are dismayed and angry at the Harris government for cutting 10,000 nursing jobs. Everyone knows, except the Harris government, that nurses are the front-line workers who provide stability, credibility and professionalism to our health care system.

That is why I am asking the Harris government today to support Bill 84, my private member's bill, which is in fact a bill of rights for nurses. I believe nurses deserve it. With

this government, I believe they need it to protect them in order for them to do their jobs.

GARBAGE DISPOSAL

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My statement today is about protecting the environment, and I want to take this opportunity to outline my position on shipping Toronto's or other large cities' garbage to the Adams mine site in Kirkland Lake. My position and that of the NDP party have never wavered or changed on this issue. We are categorically opposed to using northern Ontario as a dumping ground for Toronto's garbage.

During the 1990 provincial election, I fought against the Liberal government and the Conservative candidate at that time to have Toronto's garbage shipped to Kapuskasing, there to be incinerated or dumped in the landfill. Fortunately, the Liberal plans never saw the light of day.

In government, the NDP delivered on our promise not to use northern Ontario as a dumping ground for Toronto's garbage. You can rest assured it was not popular with everybody in southern Ontario but it was the right thing to do, I believe. We believed then, as we do now, that the garbage issue should be taken care of locally within the municipalities.

There is no guarantee that the garbage site at the Adams mine site won't contaminate local groundwater. I've been told that the rock is so fractured at this site that the pollutants inevitably will leak into the groundwater.

We must not gamble our environment away. The stakes for us, for our children and for generations to come are too high.

There are a lot of other economic development concerns that can be developed out there for each and every community within northern Ontario to create jobs and make sure the environment is protected at the same time that we're developing and creating new jobs in the north.

CHRISTMAS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): This certainly is the season of hope and happiness. I have participated in several community events in my riding of Durham East to recognize the importance of Christmas as a time for everyone to have hope and optimism for the future.

Most recently, I was in the Santa Claus parade in Bowmanville, another Santa Claus parade in Port Perry, and of course there are parades throughout Durham to mark this very special occasion. This past weekend I was very privileged to be involved with the Christmas tree lighting in the town of Whitby and the municipality of Bowmanville.

Fundraising activities are also very much part of the agenda on the weekends, where most members in the House, I'm sure, attend a variety of activities at church bazaars, museum activities, as well as perhaps the charity breakfasts that are being held by many business organizations. Most important, I want to recognize the wonderful work that the Salvation Army does at this time of year, providing food and toys for families in need. Also, the

Durham regional police toy drive is currently underway and all members are encouraged to participate in their communities.

With a 30% tax cut and more jobs than ever in the history of this province, I call on all members to be generous to their fellow community members at this time of year, and I extend my best wishes for a wonderful, safe, happy and hopeful Christmas to everyone in this House this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Reports by committees? Introduction of bills? Motions?

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(e)(i), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 12 midnight on December 7, 8 and 10, 1998, for the purpose of conducting government business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 95(g), the notice requirement be waived with respect to private member's ballot item number 40.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice with respect to the standing committee on resources development and Bill 71, the Professional Foresters Act.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the standing committee on resources development be authorized to meet on Tuesday, December 8, 1998, outside of its regularly scheduled meeting times, but not during routine proceedings, for the purpose of considering Bill 71, An Act respecting the regulation of the practice of Professional Forestry.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I'd ask for unanimous consent to revert to introduction of bills as one of the members present wanted to introduce a private member's bill but was not here.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

1350

FAIR DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICAL RESOURCES ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR LA DISTRIBUTION ÉQUITABLE DES RESSOURCES MÉDICALES

Mr Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 95, An Act to provide for fair distribution of medical resources in Ontario / Projet de loi 95, Loi assurant la distribution équitable des ressources médicales en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): This bill requires students in a faculty of medicine in Ontario to enter a contract with the crown under which they agree after graduating to practise medicine in an area of Ontario designated by the Minister of Health within a period specified in the contract and for the period specified in the contract. If they default on the contract, the crown would be entitled to recover from them the amount of the cost of their education that the crown has paid or subsidized.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY DECISION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Deputy Premier. There have been concerns raised by the people of Ontario with respect to the proposed settlement for the former Speaker. Your government has offered to settle the case for in excess of \$430,000, not including the Legislative Assembly's own costs. The Legislative Assembly's own solicitors know of no case where a third party such as the Legislative Assembly, whose liability in their opinion is extremely remote, would in effect pay the legal costs of all parties involved.

Why would you instruct our lawyers to settle the case on the basis of a payment of \$430,000 when they themselves have strongly recommended against such a settlement?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Kingston and The Islands, that question is not properly before the House. Questions before the House can be only government matters. It's a Board of Internal Economy issue. All parties —

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Then why did the government support the settlement?

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold.

All parties are represented on the Board of Internal Economy. It's therefore inappropriate and not properly before the House.

Mr Gerretsen: With all due respect, Speaker, this is a matter that has —

The Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order, member for Perth. Stop the clock, please.

Member for Kingston and The Islands, please sit down. I will entertain points of order on this issue if you'd like me to, but my ruling is that this particular question is out of order.

Mr Gerretsen: I'd like to stand the question down then at this stage.

The Speaker: I'll have to get back on standing it down.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order: Surely, Speaker, if the member were to direct the question to the Treasurer or to the Chair of Management Board, those ministers are responsible for authorizing the expenditure of the funds for the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, you're incorrect. The authorization of those funds comes directly from the Board of Internal Economy. Appropriations are submitted by the Board of Internal Economy, with representation from all parties. It is not a government decision as to how those monies are appropriated; it's a decision of the Board of Internal Economy. It is therefore not properly before this House. It is a legislative matter.

What I'm trying to explain is that the question, as it's worded, is out of order. I don't think you can stand down an out-of-order question. If you want to go on to another question, you're more than welcome to, but you can't stand down a question that's out of order.

Mr Gerretsen: I will ask the question in a different fashion then, Mr Speaker. I will simply ask the Deputy Premier why he would instruct the members of his government on the Board of Internal Economy to settle the case on the payment of \$430,000.

The Speaker: It's still out of order. I'm sorry.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is \$400,000 of taxpayers' money. The people where I come from were adamant —

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, let me just say this: I am prepared to listen to your point of order.

Mr Kormos: — behind doors, secret deal —

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, come to order. Having a rant at me — I'm not arguing the point with you.

Mr Kormos: The people want to know —

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, come to order. It's not a question of the appropriateness of the expenditure or the appropriateness of the decision-making.

All I'm saying to the members of the opposition is, what is properly before this House is outlined in our

standing orders. A government cannot be questioned on expenditures and decisions made for the Legislative Assembly by the Board of Internal Economy because we are all representatives on that board.

I understand the frustration you have, but it doesn't put the question in order.

Member for Kingston and The Islands, first question.

Mr Gerretsen: My question then, is, will you bring this matter to the floor of the Legislature in order for it to be debated by all of us, the representatives of the province —

The Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, the fact is they have no ability to do that. The government can't bring an issue from the Board of Internal Economy to the House.

I am going to have to ask you to ask a new question or an in-order question, or we're going to have to move on.

Mr Gerretsen: I request unanimous consent that there be a free and open public debate about this issue in the House at this time.

The Speaker: You'd better clarify it for me. You want to just dispense with question period today and have an open debate on this issue?

Mr Gerretsen: After question period.

The Speaker: All right.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Brant-Haldimand, come to order.

I think everyone understands consent. Agreed? No.

First question, the member for Windsor-Sandwich.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is directed to the Minister of Community and Social Services and it's with regard to children's mental health services in Ontario, specifically agencies that provide day treatment programs and residential beds for children who are considered severe kids who cannot be in school. Some are suicidal, some are extremely violent.

In Windsor, 600 children are currently on a waiting list to get some kind of service through these children's mental health agencies. In Thunder Bay, the list is 250 children with severe issues that must be addressed.

Last week in Windsor police removed a loaded gun from underneath a 12-year-old boy's bed. Though the children's aid were called, they couldn't take the child into care because his case wasn't as serious as others. This boy's family had been trying to get mental health services for their child long before it reached the crisis. The waiting list, though, 600 kids long, meant that it must become an emergency before it becomes addressed.

Minister, what are you prepared to do to improve —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Children's mental health services are indeed a very important support for families in this province. One of the initiatives we are undertaking through Making Services Work for People is to try to

ensure that children's mental health services are part of the children's services envelope; that where we can find ways to find savings on the administration side, we can invest that money back into priority areas, for example, children's mental health, because we know there need to be more financial supports out there for families who are facing circumstances where their child does have a mental health issue.

We've been very pleased that across the province in many of the communities that are undertaking this planning process — and I'd like to stress it is a community planning process — we are identifying not only new dollars that we can reinvest in those priority areas but also better ways to deliver those programs so that families are not caught on waiting lists.

Mrs Pupatello: This past fall, one of the schools in my riding had four children who should have been in one of these day treatment programs but unfortunately found themselves on this waiting list. Three of the four were suicidal. One of the children tried to kill himself by climbing on top of the monkey bars at recess and was sent home where he then tried to hang himself in the family closet. The boy ended up in intensive care — one more example of a child on a waiting list who had to become a crisis before he moved up the list.

Minister, you talk about the community plan in restructuring for children's services, but the truth is that they are beholden to your ministry for inaccurate data to determine the future needs of these children's services. Your current plan now in our area is to cut more beds and cut day treatment programs instead of improving them for the needs that exist in our community. Our area has already lost 80 beds.

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Minister, your answer did not answer the question. What will you do for Ontario's children who are severely disturbed?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, the Making Services Work for People initiative, which is, as she knows, a community-based planning process, is not about cutting services and it's not about cutting money. As a matter of fact, no money is being taken out and it has been identified in many communities where we can find new money to reinvest in some of those priority areas.

The other improvement that Making Services Work for People, the community planning process, is going to identify for us, and does in many communities, is that what happens is that families go from agency to agency to try and get the services they need. They get stuck on their waiting lists, they get assessed, they get reassessed and they get reassessed again. That's not a good way to meet those families' needs.

One of two key objectives of this new process is to have one coordinated access point. You get priorities so that those children the honourable member mentions get the priority they need. Second, one assessment is done of that family and that child so they don't keep constantly

having to go through some administrative bureaucracy red tape.

Mrs Pupatello: To the minister: There is nothing in your answer that will resolve the issue that currently exists for children on waiting lists who have severe emotional and behavioural issues.

In Thunder Bay today, the current list at the Lakehead Regional Family Centre is 250 children. The region has had a whopping 40% increase in suicidal children over the last several years, but since you took office, a decrease in funding by 12.4%. In fact, the kids in crisis in Thunder Bay end up in a hospital because you cannot allow the intervention because you have cut the services.

Minister, what you are talking about in your answer does nothing to resolve children in crisis who are in crisis today in Ontario. We hope you have a better answer than that next time.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect, the honourable member is quite aware of the problems in children's services, including children's mental health. This was a problem that was in existence before our government came into power. It was a problem they themselves had identified as needing significant reform. They had put out a community planning process. We are actually doing it because they didn't do it when they had the opportunity as government.

There's no question, there are waiting lists, there are families and children who need better services, and rather than sitting here and complaining about it as the honourable member is doing, we are actually taking steps that are going to result in improvements for these families, in taking children off waiting lists.

The other point is, the minister responsible for children, Margaret Marland, is also reviewing with families how we can better improve the services out there, just to mention two initiatives that are actually going to help families have better services.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY DECISION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question again is to the Deputy Premier. Your government has been using taxpayers' dollars very freely, as a matter of fact in excess of some \$47 million for blatant political advertising campaigns, yet parents can't get daycare places for their children. In my own community about 2,000 patients are doing without any home care because of the cuts by your government. Emergency departments have been closed.

I would very simply like to ask you, will you instruct your members on the Board of Internal Economy to bring forth a motion so that this matter can be discussed and debated fully in this House?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I can see where the member for Kingston and The Islands is going, but the question is still out of order. I appreciate the fact that you've somehow tied it in with the government, but the question was, "Would you instruct your members of the

Board of Internal Economy?" As chair of the Board of Internal Economy, a tripartite board, it's out of order. You just can't get around it.

Start the clock again, please.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Surely to goodness there's nothing wrong in asking in this House that a cabinet minister who deals with the finances of this province give instructions or make a request to the members of his governing party who sit on the Board of Internal Economy in this province. That's all I'm asking him right now, to simply ask your members who sit on the Board of Internal Economy to bring forth a motion so this matter can —

The Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, the point I'm trying to make to you is that yes, that's not right; it is wrong. The rationale is because the Board of Internal Economy —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Riverside, I don't want to be heckled when I'm up here.

The fact is that it's an internal committee, sat on by all parties of this Legislature. It is not the government's responsibility to answer for that committee. It's just that simple.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Point of order, Mr Speaker: I appreciate your ruling. Would it be helpful for us to suggest that by unanimous consent of this House, this whole matter and this sizeable expenditure could be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee for discussion and debate at its convenience?

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, unanimous consent is always in order, so if you're seeking that unanimous consent and there is unanimous consent, of course it's in order.

Mr Wildman: So I'm asking for unanimous consent to refer this matter to the Legislative Assembly committee of this House to consider this sizable expenditure of public funds.

The Speaker: Agreed? I heard a "No."

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Point of order, Mr Speaker: Please, \$400,000 is a sizable amount of taxpayers' money. How does the public access the decision to spend half a million dollars? Please, Speaker, I'm asking for your guidance. The public wants to know. Surely, there has to be —

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, I appreciate what you're saying, but it's not my role nor my responsibility to advise caucuses on how best to go about doing their business. I only interpret the rules as set down by the rest of us. The rules are fairly clear on this one. If there is no angle around it, there's no angle around it. It's not up to me to find one for you. I wish I could, but I can't.

Mr Kormos: Point of order, Speaker: This is an affront to democracy, that the public has no right to know what went on behind those closed doors that resulted in an expenditure of almost half a million dollars.

The Speaker: You know what? You've entered into debate. It's really not a point of order any more, it's debate.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have two suggestions. Since, as I understand it, there will have to be supplementary estimates to cover this expenditure, would the House agree by unanimous consent to refer this matter to the estimates committee?

The Speaker: I'm not sure that's accurate. I don't know if there will have to be supplementary estimates made. I don't want to tell you how it's going to be funded, because then we're into a debate in this Legislature about the Board of Internal Economy. But I don't want to mislead you into thinking that is the process that has been adopted. At the Board of Internal Economy, if you talk to your own member, she would inform you of the same thing.

Mr Wildman: OK. Then I have another suggestion, Speaker: Will the House give unanimous consent to allow the member for Kingston and The Islands to put the question?

The Speaker: That's always in order. Does the House agree to allow the member for Kingston and The Islands to put his question? I heard a "No."

New question, member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: This is a new question, Mr Speaker. We all know that the Conservative Party has used thousands, indeed millions of dollars to defame the leader of my party. Your coffers are filled to the limit. Let me —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Hang on.

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VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to take this opportunity to inform all members that we have in the Speaker's gallery today the Honourable Jose Lello, Secretary of State for the Portuguese Communities Overseas. Please join me in welcoming him here today.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY DECISION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is very simple: Will you use those same Conservative Party dollars that you have available for all sorts of advertising to compensate the people of Ontario for the settlement that is being proposed by your members in the Board of Internal Economy? I'm not talking about government money. I'm talking about money that the PC Party has. We've got better use for our public monies than for these kind of initiatives. Will you be using Conservative Party money to compensate the people of Ontario for the costs of the —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Stop the clock. You've entered into a different area now. The reason this area is out of order too is because the party, anybody's party, isn't government responsibility. The Progressive Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party aren't open for public debate in questions today. You can only ask government about government issues.

Mr Gerretsen: I ask, then, will you recommend to your party here in Ontario that it pay for the damages the people of Ontario will have to pay as a result of the settlement offer that your people have put on the table?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I've sat on the Board of Internal Economy in this place for 10 years. The Board of Internal Economy is a function of the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly has its own budget. It isn't determined by the government; it's determined by the members themselves. The Board of Internal Economy strikes a budget. It is chaired, as you know, by the Speaker of the day. It has representation from all three parties, and it determines how it spends its money. I don't think you would want, quite frankly, not just this government but any government in this place in the 18 years I've been sitting here to determine that for those people. That is why we have a Board of Internal Economy in the first place.

Mr Gerretsen: The people across this province are extremely concerned about how their tax dollars are being spent. I had all sorts of comments over the weekend and undoubtedly other members had comments about this as well.

All I'm asking you is, will you go to your Conservative Party executive members and ask them whether the party itself will be prepared to compensate the government of Ontario for whatever money it has to pay to settle this matter? That's what I'm asking you. Just answer that very simple question: Will you make that recommendation to the executive of the PC Party of Ontario?

The Speaker: You know what? That one's out of order now. You can't ask government members questions about the party. You were on side in the last one, but now it's not a proper question before the House.

Mr Gerretsen: With all due respect, Speaker, I did not ask him about the Conservative Party of Ontario. I asked him to do something so that the people of Ontario can be compensated for the amount they're out as a result of this settlement.

The Speaker: That's in order.

Hon Mr Eves: I have never asked or directed officials from the Ontario PC Party to do anything.

Interjection: Oh, come on.

Hon Mr Eves: I have not, ever, in my almost 18 years as a member of the Legislature, either on that side of the House or on this side of the House, either there, there or here, and I don't know why I would start now. I have never directed another member of the Board of Internal Economy to do anything, whether I was sitting over there or sitting over here. I am not a member of the Board of Internal Economy. I don't know what went on in the Board of Internal Economy, but it is an autonomous body, determining part of the budget of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, chaired by the Speaker.

Mr Gerretsen: Sir, the taxpayers of Ontario are very concerned about how their money is being spent, particularly in a situation like this. They find it very difficult to comprehend that, in addition to our assembly's own legal costs, they will have to pay out another \$430,000.

The taxpayers are concerned about that and they want to know what this government is prepared to do to rectify that wrong.

I'm asking you a very broad and general final supplementary question: What are you, as the Minister of Finance involved with the finances of this province on a day-to-day basis, prepared to do about the situation in order to rectify what the people of Ontario feel is a great miscarriage of justice?

Hon Mr Eves: There have been many issues and many matters, and presumably other lawsuits and settlements determined by the Board of Internal Economy. I know when I sat on the board for 10 years there certainly were many lawsuits that came before the board by employees and former employees etc. There are no directions given by the government. The board is an independent body. It is responsible to the Legislative Assembly, it is chaired by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and it makes its own decisions as to how it spends its own budget.

As the member over here has stated, if more monies would be needed for any purpose by the Board of Internal Economy, they may well be required to seek a supplementary estimate or a supplementary line item in their budget, but to the best of my understanding — however, I'm not a member of the board — that has not happened and that is not the case in this instance.

The Speaker: New question, third party. Leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is to the Deputy Premier in his role as Deputy Premier. My question is this: Do you support the members of your caucus, people who are responsible to you in your role as Deputy Premier? Do you support the expenditure of at least \$400,000 in this way?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, I don't know exactly what the Board of Internal Economy decided. I don't know all the issues that were before the board. I'm not a member of the board. However, I was a member of the board for some 10 years and I think every member of the board apprises himself or herself of the issues that are before the board of the day and they make a determination based on their own conscience as to how they vote on any individual matter. It is not for me or anybody else to direct those members as to how they vote and how they expend the budget that is allotted to them by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: I'm glad the Deputy Premier brought up the issue of conscience because I want to ask you about the conscience of your government, about the standards of your government. Does it meet with the standards of your government, with the conscience of your government, that over \$400,000 of taxpayers' money should be spent in this way, Deputy Premier?

Hon Mr Eves: Maybe he knows all the particulars of what went on at the board. I didn't understand that you were a member of the Board of Internal Economy, but maybe you are; I stand to be corrected. I certainly don't know the discussion that went on. I don't know the facts that were presented to the board and I don't know what

ultimate decision or recommendation they have or haven't made.

Mr Hampton: It's widely reported in the press, not just in this city but in this province and elsewhere, exactly what is going down. Again I have to ask you, Deputy Premier, does it meet the standards of your government, does it meet the conscience of your government in terms of how taxpayers' money is spent that this approval should be made behind closed doors, in secret, without any public debate, any public discussion?

Don't tell us you don't know what happened. Virtually everybody in Ontario knows by now what happened and will know more about what happened despite your efforts to keep it quiet.

Does this meet the standards of your government, the conscience of your government for the spending of taxpayers' money, that Conservative members would meet in a closed room, in secret, and approve this kind of expenditure?

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Hon Mr Eves: I think the leader of the third party is trying to create the impression that somehow the Board of Internal Economy today, in 1998, is operating under different rules than it was between the years 1990 and 1995 when his government was in power, or any time before that, since the board's inception, I might add. Let it be clear that the board is operating under exactly the same rules and principles it always has. There is a procedure for the minutes of the board meeting to be made public at a certain point in time. He quite knows that.

It is an independent board. It is represented by all three parties. It is chaired by the Speaker of the Ontario Legislature. This is not a party issue. This is an issue of an independent body chaired by the independent Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, and it determines how it expends its budget allotted to it.

The Speaker: New question, third party. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I would say to you, Deputy Premier, that this is about the standards of your government. This is about the conscience of your government when it comes to the spending of taxpayers' money.

WORKFARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Deputy Premier again: My second question is about how you treat the poorest citizens of this province. In the last two weeks, everyone from the United Way to the United Nations has condemned the way your government goes after the poorest people in this province.

On Friday the United Nations committee on economic, social and cultural rights released its report on human rights in Canada, and guess what? They singled out Ontario to be condemned. The committee particularly mentioned Bill 22, your law that makes it illegal for workfare participants to join a union. The committee said Bill 22 is a clear violation of article VIII of the particular United Nations covenant.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question?

Mr Hampton: Minister, will you do away with Bill 22 so Ontario can observe and live up to its obligations under —

The Speaker: Deputy Premier.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Mr Speaker, I refer this question to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Research reports from agencies such as the United Nations can be of great help to governments at all levels in addressing serious problems; for example, the problem of child poverty. Those data and that information can be very helpful. Unfortunately, if those data are not correct, it leaves governments at a loss to implement recommendations that they may well be putting forward. As the honourable member is very much aware, there are people on welfare who currently belong to unions. There are people on welfare who have part-time jobs in unionized workplaces. Nothing that we are doing as a government is going to change that.

Mr Hampton: I gather what we're hearing from the minister is that she considers herself above international law, that she can disregard international law, that international human rights sanctioned by the United Nations somehow don't apply to her.

Does the name — oh, I won't mention it, but there is another person in the world right now who says that international law doesn't apply to him.

The reality is that they single Ontario out as attacking poor people. We're used to this. We remember Bill 7, where you went after every working person in the province, where you tried to make it more difficult for them to form a union, and that one was condemned by the International Labour Organization.

What you're really up to in Bill 22 is you're trying to deny the human rights of the poorest people in this province and you're also trying to send them a message. Your message is: "Don't bother trying to organize a union to help yourself. This government will crush you."

It's a matter of international human rights. Will you withdraw Bill 22 and observe —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate the concern of the honourable member, but to somehow try and spin that the Ontario government somehow considers international law not appropriate is absolute balderdash. There is nothing this government is doing that is taking away the rights of individuals on welfare. People who are on social assistance today belong to unions; there is nothing wrong with that. People who are on welfare today have part-time jobs in unionized workplaces; there is nothing wrong with that. And there is nothing this government wants to do to take that away. We are not in violation of anything from the United Nations; quite the contrary, the programs we have in place are getting more people off welfare into paid jobs.

The right to work is something the United Nations thinks is very important. They think that actually helps

families move themselves out of poverty. Last month, 17,000 more people in Ontario left the welfare roles. They're out there in paid employment. That is 357,000 fewer people trapped on welfare today than there were three and a half years ago. That's people who are —

The Speaker: Final supplementary, member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Minister, one of your prosperous government backbenchers enjoys taxpayer support to the tune of almost half a million dollars, yet you continue to dump on the poor. In fact, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow; your policies are making sure of that. We know that working people organize themselves into unions because the minimum standards that you and your government have established are not enough to bring families out of poverty. This is another thing the UN report said. You should pay close attention to it. "The committee is concerned that the minimum wage is not sufficient for a worker to have an adequate standard of living which also covers his or her family."

Minister, you shouldn't be denying workfare participants the right to organize; you should be telling them how to do it, so that they don't move from social assistance to working poverty but into an adequate standard of living in a unionized job. Bill 22 violates international convention; it tells people on social assistance that they have no rights. Do the right thing: Repeal it. Acknowledge that you are subject to that international law.

Hon Mrs Ecker: One of the most significant things in this country that has undermined the incomes of families is increased government taxation. That's something they don't like to mention over there. If you're in a low-income job, the last thing the government should be doing is reaching into your pocket and taking away money. That's why in this province 655,000 fewer —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Chief government whip, you must withdraw that comment.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): I withdraw it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister, come to order, please.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Because we believe that people who are in low-income working circumstances need all the help and support they can get from their government, that's why we have removed people in low-income jobs from the Ontario tax rolls; 655,000 fewer folks are paying Ontario income tax. That's very important. Through the national child benefit, those low-income working families are getting over \$1,600 per child in additional money, dollars in their pockets, to help strengthen their family. That is on top of the money they can get through the child care supplement for working families in low-income circumstances; that's another \$1,000 to those families. I will stack up —

The Speaker: Thank you. Official opposition, member for Fort William.

TEXTBOOKS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, one of the constant things about your government is that you're more interested in your public relations message than in actually getting things right. I have here a copy of a letter that's gone out to every small business in Ontario, offering congratulations on the contribution of small business to the economy. This letter happens to have gone to the president of a small Ontario publishing firm that specializes in producing teacher resource materials to match the Ontario curriculum.

Interjection.

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Mrs McLeod: The question is for the Minister of Education, I tell the minister responsible for economic development and trade. It's definitely an education question, because the fact is that although the Premier's letter talks about the outstanding contribution of this small company, your ministry is simply shutting this company out. My question is, will you respond to the concerns of this outstanding small Ontario firm and expand your list of approved curriculum materials so that teachers can have the resource materials they need?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): If the question is, through the next purchase of material, will teachers be allowed to purchase the course material — it's rather hard to determine what the question was, but if that is the question, yes, it was announced a month ago that teachers will have the opportunity to buy the curriculum material supporting the textbooks.

I will say, since I've been given the opportunity, this is one of the greatest successes we've had in the province this year, that we have purchased \$68 million worth of textbooks for elementary students at a savings of \$13 million, for a net cost of \$55 million. The next wave of purchase is underway at the present time, and teachers, yes, will have the opportunity to purchase their guideline material through that particular purchase.

Mrs McLeod: The fact is, when you get beyond the public relations campaign, this government didn't allow any teacher resource materials to make the list. The fact is that they turned a decision on the purchase of \$75 million worth of textbooks into a total fiasco because they wanted to create a photo opportunity. They rushed into the publication of text, they rushed teachers into making choices, they shut out many Canadian-produced materials, and they botched things up so badly that some of the textbooks that went out actually had erasable text. The problem is, they're doing it again.

I have a letter here from Brian Henderson, the head of the science department at Westdale Secondary School in Hamilton-Wentworth. Mr Henderson is concerned about the fact that his school is being given exactly 10 days — once again, 10 days — to choose new science materials from a new ministry list. He received the notice of his school's funding and the approved list of materials on December 4. The deadline for purchases is December 15 and, Minister, you haven't even released the science curriculum that the materials are being purchased for.

Why are you repeating the same mistakes you made last spring? What's the rush this time?

Hon David Johnson: It's a puzzle as to where to start. The curriculum for the elementary schools was released way back last year. The secondary purchase is not yet underway. The materials that are being purchased are at the elementary level.

Interjections.

Hon David Johnson: In all the caterwauling here, I will say that the member is wrong on a number of different circumstances. One, the Canadian material: All of the books at the elementary level were published by publishers who have been providing textbooks to our schools here in Ontario for at least 15 years and they're all located right here in Canada. All of the books were actually printed right here in Canada except for 11,000 of the 3.3 million books; 11,000, because of some special feature, were not printed in Canada. All the rest were printed right here in Canada. This has been the greatest purchase of material in the history of the province of Ontario, and I'm proud of it.

Mrs McLeod: On a point of order, Speaker: I will send a copy of the ministry's directives that went out to school boards to show that they are purchasing the secondary school materials by December 15.

The Speaker: New question, third party.

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, Bill 160 and your funding formula are not finished creating a crisis. We know now that 1,500 children will be evicted from daycare spaces because of your funding formula, because your funding formula doesn't allow for the calculation of child care centres in a school's budget in terms of the maintenance costs and the operating costs. Added to the 1,500 who are already going to be evicted, there's a further 15,000 on the waiting list, and 20,000 more will join once Ontario Works is fully implemented.

Minister, for you, apparently early childhood education is not part of the learning process. Virtually every study and every expert in North America says it is, that early childhood education, early child development, is the most important component in education and in learning. Why is your government going in the opposite direction?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Complete and utter nonsense, as is usual from the leader of the third party. That's why people get so frustrated, because he says things that are incorrect, question after question.

For example, the allegation he's making pertaining to schools in Toronto is pure conjecture. The Toronto school board indeed has indicated through the Toronto Star that they'll be closing no schools before June 2000. At that point in time they may not close any schools, they may close 20 schools, they may close 30 schools. So who would know, who would possibly know? Nobody knows whether that will involve any daycare centres or not.

The fact is that through the Premier's recent announcement, over \$50 million will be going to the Toronto school board to support its operating costs, and some of that money, I might say, through unique features that schools have —

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon David Johnson: — will be because the Toronto school board has wider hallways and has a higher proportion of daycare centres. That amounts to about a 6% increase for the Toronto school board, partially —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): What a lot of baffleleg. Minister, your funding formula has taken child care centres and put them on the chopping block. You're the ones who are forcing schools to ration their space, and in that priority your Bill 160 has said child care centres don't make the grade, don't make the priority.

I wonder if you can remember back to your throne speech, the one where you appointed Dr Fraser Mustard to conduct a review. He's going to be reporting recommendations this month to the minister responsible for children's issues. Listen to what he has said in the past, "Good, affordable daycare or early childhood education for all sectors of society is key for the future of a learning society."

That child care-school link was developing all across Ontario until your government started to dismantle it. You're the ones who cancelled the funding for new child care centres in schools. Bill 160 formally dissolved that child care-school link that was in place and now your funding formula is going to force eviction of children and child care centres. If Dr Fraser Mustard's recommendation says you're wrong and supports child care, will you change your funding formula, Minister?

Hon David Johnson: I think this government has shown an extreme willingness to listen, if you think of the adjustments this government has made to the funding formula for special education, the support for schools in terms of those who have 7.5 credits for secondary students, in terms of transportation, in terms of retirement gratuity monies, in terms of the \$211 million of permanent funding into our schools to support operating costs.

Yes, we're most interested in the Fraser Mustard study. That's why we appointed people such as Mr Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain, specialists in the area of early childhood education, because this government believes that early childhood education is most important.

Yes, we will obviously listen very closely. But having said that, I'll reiterate that in terms of the operating costs, the Toronto school board and other school boards will be getting specific money because of the amount of daycare space they have and the new pupil places. The funding formula does not penalize schools for daycare centres —

The Speaker: New question.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Small businesses provide

over 80% of the jobs in this province, as you well know. That's over 350,000 net new jobs that have been created by small businesses since this government came to power in 1995, provided by small business alone.

When we passed the Fair Municipal Finance Act, we gave municipalities some tools to ensure that small businesses, which provide 80% of the jobs, would not suffer debilitating tax increases. We heard from the Canadian federation of small business, however, and from some of our colleagues in the government that only 10% of municipalities used those tools, resulting in disastrous property tax increases for these small businesses, many of those increases being between 50% and 600%. Some of those businesses were located in my riding of Kitchener.

I want to thank you for meeting with the members for York-Mackenzie, Wentworth North, Durham East and myself in September to discuss this problem. Minister, do you have any numbers on how many small businesses were affected by irresponsible municipal actions and by how much?

1440

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, inside the city of Toronto, of course, small business — any type of business, commercial or industrial property — is protected by a 2.5% absolute cap. Outside the city of Toronto, however, after municipalities around the province — and quite frankly, some of them acted very responsibly; some unfortunately did not. Fifty per cent of commercial taxpayers outside the city of Toronto, some 73,000, face tax increases of greater than 10%; 60,000 face tax increases greater than 20%; and 21%, or some 30,000 commercial taxpayers outside of Toronto, face tax increases of 50% or greater. Similarly, with respect to industrial properties, 34%, or some 9,000, face tax increases of greater than 20%.

Therefore the government did respond —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Wettlaufer: Minister, my riding of Kitchener is located in Waterloo region, which hiked property taxes this year by 5.3% to cover, as they explained it, the costs of downloading. That, in addition to the unacceptably high tax increases that the small businesses in my riding suffered, threatened to bankrupt many of those small businesses. Regional and city of Kitchener officials blamed the provincial government. Now we find that the region has projected a surplus of \$2.2 million, and that money is burning a hole in their pockets. The region is trying to determine what to do with the money.

Minister, do you have any advice for the regional municipality of Waterloo?

Hon Mr Eves: Far be it from me to advise municipal representatives what they should do with the money they have collected from their taxpayers. However, municipal representatives should not be raising tax rates to build up a reserve or to build up a surplus. I can see them raising taxes if it's necessary to make ends meet; however, I can't see them doing it to build up a reserve or a surplus.

We did receive submissions from various municipalities as well as AMO to permit municipalities to have

the option of lowering a rate for a particular class or classes during any particular year, and we introduced an amendment in committee this morning to accommodate that request.

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Ontarians have been aware for some time how your government has denied them access to MRI machines, how they have been forced to go down to the United States and buy the service, how you have created loopholes that have allowed certain hospitals to contract out to athletes, to private insurance companies. You effectively allow people to jump the queue.

Some of the jumping is being done with four feet. In London, it's so bad in terms of the little bit of funding you provide that veterinarians and dogs are having access to the MRI machines. Minister, will you confirm to us today that this arrangement, where dogs can receive an MRI scan, the most advanced diagnostic procedure available, ahead of people in Mike Harris's Ontario, was approved by you as the Minister of Health? Will you stand in the House today and tell us that you approved this arrangement?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): To the member of the opposition party, once again we have some information that isn't quite as the case is in fact. Third-party use of MRI machines is nothing new in this province. In fact, it was the NDP government in 1992 who legalized this practice. It was also the NDP two years later who put in place the funding for the MRI machines.

However, I am very pleased to say that it is our government that is leading the way throughout Canada in ensuring that our population has better access to MRIs than anywhere else in Canada. If we take a look at provincial comparisons regarding MRI machines, we can see that, unlike you, who only made the MRIs available to hospitals in teaching centres, our government is making every effort to ensure that there is equitable access to MRIs throughout this province, whether you live in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Ottawa or Windsor.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, that answer is neither acceptable nor accurate. Section 4.4 of the Public Hospitals Act says you have to approve when buildings and equipment are being leased out or rented. If it's not technically your responsibility, then it sure as heck is morally.

Danielle Rancinan is a 47-year-old woman who had to wait eight months for an MRI under your government. She was too ill to go down to the United States and have it done, as many people have had to do under the Harris government.

You provide the lowest funding in Canada for MRI machines in hospitals. You force hospitals to cannibalize their other services. You go around the province making public relations announcements when in fact you don't even pay one dollar in six for operating those machines, and you make the communities buy them themselves.

Minister, what you should have said and what you still have a chance to stand up and say is that you will not put up with pets and privileged people having access to MRIs ahead of sick people, and that you'll announce today proper and full funding, including the funding you took away, to MRI machines in this province. Minister, do that.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member still does not understand that our government has done more to improve access to MRI machines than any past government in Ontario. It was your government that introduced the MRIs. You made them available only to the teaching centres. We have tripled access to MRIs since we were elected in this province. We presently have approved 31 machines. There are four more machines to be approved. You will have access no matter where you live, whether you live in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Windsor or Ottawa. We have made absolutely no change to the practice where there's third party usage of MRI machines.

Also, I am very pleased to say we have done nothing in regard to the level of funding. However, I will tell you, we have not cut funding. In fact, we are looking to further increase the funding. We have done more than any other government. We are number one in Canada for access to —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, and it's about your new ads in the United States. I hope they're not like your recent ads in the United States, where you told people about our good-quality schools and our highly trained workforce, and then the Premier came home, attacked our teachers and started closing the schools and attacking workers and their unions.

I also hope these new ads aren't like the ads you've been running in some of the Ontario newspapers, talking about jobs. This is one that was in the London Free Press and it talks about new jobs being created at Labatt's. But then the next day Ron Blain, who happens to work at Labatt's in London, writes a letter to the editor and points out — and he should know; he is one of the union stewards there, on the union executive —

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Oh, well, he knows for sure, of course.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Howie's research has gone to new heights.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Stop the clock. Members, come to order. He only said, "union steward." Come to order, please. It's not a joke. We're out of order all the time now for silly stuff. Member for Scarborough East, would you be helpful? Thank you.

Mr Hampton: I'm sorry, Ron Blain is actually the president of the union there. He points out in his letter that

in fact there are fewer jobs at Labatt's now than were there four years ago. He also points out that workers weren't told when they were enlisted for this photograph that it was for the Mike Harris propaganda machine. The workers there are still waiting for an apology.

My question for the minister is: Will you stop trying to spin a propaganda campaign? Your ad in London is false.

1450

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I take it the leader of the third party would like us not to talk about the positive environment we have in Ontario. Since we have formed the government, 462,000 new jobs have been created in Ontario. I think we should be out there making sure that other jurisdictions know what kind of quality product Ontario has. When you take a look at how other states spend their money to get their messages across about their environment: Ohio spends 14% more than Ontario; Virginia, 54% more than Ontario; Iowa, 73%; just to show you that this is a very positive campaign telling our good neighbours what a great province Ontario is.

Mr Hampton: I simply want to get at some of the reality of these ads. This is an ad that appeared in the Sudbury Star, paid for by your government. It brags about the creation of 30 new positions in the past 19 months at the Wabi Iron and Steel plant in New Liskeard. The only trouble is that when you go and talk to the workers at Wabi Iron and Steel in New Liskeard, there aren't 30 new jobs; in fact, they've actually lost jobs in the last 19 months. I can give you others. There's the famous Babcock and Wilcox ad that the government ran.

The point is that your government continues to spend all kinds of taxpayers' money on ads that are false. People know they're false. People know they're phony. People had their picture taken for these ads without being told it was going to be used in a propaganda campaign.

Minister, will you do the right thing, put the money back into health care, into education, and stop putting out these phony ads?

Hon Mr Palladini: Our government is doing the right thing and we're going to continue those things. If the leader of the third party wants to talk about specifics, let's talk about Sterling Trucks. It means an additional 400 jobs in St Thomas. Let's talk about Novartis, an additional 50 jobs in Oshawa. Let's talk about Hammerson Canada, where 4,200 jobs are presently there, and that number is expected to rise to over 5,500.

We are doing what's needed to make sure that the positive economic environment we have in our province will continue. We're going to do everything to make sure that more people get to know what we do have and the quality of product we have in Ontario.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): My question is for the Minister without Portfolio, responsible for privatization, who is also the government's lead on auto insurance issues. Last week the minister introduced a bill into the

Legislature and delivered a statement regarding the government's successes related to auto insurance reform. In fact, it's my understanding that he said that auto insurance premiums are down, on average, by about 11% since our government's reforms took effect in November 1996. I wonder if the minister would inform the House in greater detail as to the nature of the proposed changes and the rationale behind them.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I'd be happy to respond to the honourable member for Wellington's very important question about auto insurance and the reform that we have brought forward to Ontario as it relates to auto insurance.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): They should appoint you to the Board of Internal Economy. Go for the big perks.

Hon Mr Sampson: I hear the member for Welland-Thorold commenting here, buffering about his plan. Of course, we had to take over from an auto insurance plan that was providing Ontario drivers with inadequate coverage, and rates that skyrocketed year after year. That was the legacy that member brought with his government to the people of Ontario. We decided that was unacceptable because the people of Ontario told us that was unacceptable. So two years ago we brought forward a piece of legislation that brought fairness back to the auto insurance system in this province, provided Ontarians with the right and the responsibility to buy the appropriate insurance coverage for their own particular needs and provided stability to the rate structure in this province that no other jurisdiction in this country has been able to match yet.

Mr Arnott: I would like to thank the minister for his response and for the good work he's done on this issue in the last couple of years. I appreciate his explanation.

I wonder if the minister would provide additional details regarding some of the particular provisions contained in Bill 90, the Automobile Insurance Consumer Protection Act, as well as the other results of the two-year review of Ontario's auto insurance system, and would he indicate how children will benefit from the government's planned auto insurance changes.

Hon Mr Sampson: Again to my colleague from Wellington, I'd be happy to speak to the reform that we have brought forward, the fine-tuning, as we have called it, to the auto insurance plan that we have introduced, starting with the legislation I introduced to the House on Thursday of last week and also some statements I made to some stakeholders in the auto insurance industry this morning.

The member is correct: We did fine-tune the legislation to deal with the rights and privileges and benefits available to children involved in serious auto accidents, and we said that we want those children to have better access to the tort system for excess medical expenses. We've provided that in this particular bill.

We said that we would like to make sure that children's needs as they relate to catastrophic impairment are dealt with, to make sure they have the appropriate care and the

appropriate attention, and in fact we have done that through the regulations that we intend to bring forward as well.

Indeed, we have reformed this plan to make sure that the children of Ontario do have an auto insurance product that meets their needs and yet is still fair and affordable to the citizens of this province.

PETITIONS

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition with over 6,000 names on it in support of the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, oppose the proposed closure of Niagara's only denominational hospital and the devastating effects that proposal will have on patients and potential patients from across the region.

"We ask that the Health Services Restructuring Commission reassess its recommendations for the Niagara region and ensure quality, accessibility and affordability through a continued role for the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 90 people.

"Whereas most Ontario residents do not have adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

ELECTION CALL

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the current provincial government under Mike Harris has destroyed labour relations, gutted the

WCB, caused rampant dependence on gambling, has contributed to mass homelessness and poverty while eroding our health care, educational and municipal institutions, we, the people of Chatham-Kent, are demanding that an election be called now, before the province is destroyed, morally, ethically and financially."

I affix my name to it.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my pleasure and privilege to present a petition from my riding of Durham East. This petition was really begun by the member for Durham-York, Julia Munro. I'll read it for the Speaker, if you will. Arguably, it's being presented for Legion branch 178 and Legion branch 419.

"Whereas it is important to honour the courageous memory and sacrifices of Canada's war dead and of our veterans who fought in defence of our national rights and freedoms;

"Whereas there is a need for succeeding generations of young, school-age Canadians to learn more about the true meaning of Remembrance Day;

"Whereas Ontario veterans' associations have created excellent education materials for use in Ontario schools on the meaning and significance of Remembrance Day;

"Whereas a special Remembrance Day curriculum for all grades in Ontario's education system, developed on the basis of the programs by the Ontario veterans' associations and involving their direct participation, would increase awareness of and appreciation for Canada's wartime sacrifices in the hearts and minds of all Ontario citizens;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial Ministry of Education and Training ensure that a suitable Remembrance Day learning unit be included in the curriculum of all grades of Ontario's education system."

I'm pleased to put my name on this petition.

1500

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, bowing to the pressure from the electorate, the government of Ontario has delayed the implementation of its funding formula for one year;

"Whereas maintaining and supporting a quality public education is critical to the economic and social future of Ontario;

"Whereas particularly in large, multicultural cities, children in communities have varied needs;

"Whereas in an era of mega-mergers local schools have an extended role as a gathering place and a unifying force in our communities;

"Whereas, given the vital role of education in our society and schools in our communities, the issue of school

closings cannot not be reduced to the application of an arbitrary and mechanical economic formula.

"In recognition of the foregoing principles, our community petitions the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The funding formula must be changed to reflect students and programs, not square feet. School closings should be permitted only after completion of a thorough impact study with community consultation for each school being considered. The impact study must consider the totality of student needs and the school's role in its community. The decision to close a school should only be made after ensuring that the replacement school can deliver equivalent services of an equal or superior nature."

This petition comes signed by hundreds of parents from Weston junior school, C.R. Marchant school, King George —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you. Further petitions?

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I have here a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

After I sign this, I will give it to Mariko Mackasey from York East, who will bring it to the table.

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas providing daycare spaces is critical for the families in Toronto that need access to them; and

"Whereas the well-being of children should not be sacrificed to tax cuts; and

"Whereas the provincial government has significantly cut the budgets for the Toronto school boards; and

"Whereas under the provincial government's ill-conceived Bill 160 there is no flexibility for boards to make up for the cuts; and

"Whereas daycare spaces in schools are now threatened by these cuts with the prospect of full-cost recovery arrangements with daycares and the threat of school closures;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to repeal Bill 160 immediately, and further be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario instruct the Minister of Education and Training to restore meaningful and flexible funding to the Toronto school boards to ensure that they are able to continue to accommodate our community daycares; and

"Further be it resolved that the Honourable David Johnson, Minister of Education and Training, takes responsibility for his government's funding cuts rather than passing the buck to school boards who have no control over provincial government spending cuts."

I affix my signature.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 18 people.

"Whereas most Ontario residents do not have adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

ABORTION

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I affix my signature to this.

ADOPTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'm pleased to present a petition from a number of my constituents in Durham East, but I'd like to mention the names of Linda and Rick Davie and Peter and Wilma Hiemstra. There are a number of constituents here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Adoption Reform Coalition of Ontario (ARCO) brings together various organizations to recommend reform of Ontario adoption law based on honesty, openness and integrity;

"Whereas existing adoption secrecy legislation is outdated and unjust;

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, these rights are denied to persons affected by secrecy provisions in adoption laws of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts in Ontario;

"Whereas 20% of persons in Ontario are directly or indirectly affected by restricted rights to personal information available to other citizens;

"Whereas the adopted person's right to his or her birth identity is rooted in a basic and fundamental human need;

"Whereas most birth parents did not ask for lifelong confidentiality, it was imposed upon them involuntarily;

"Whereas research shows that not knowing basic personal information has proven harmful to adopted persons, birth parents, adoptive parents and other birth relatives; and

"Whereas research in other countries has shown that unqualified access to information in adoption satisfies the overwhelming majority of the parties involved;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revisions of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to:

"Permit unrestricted access to full personal, identifying birth information to adopted persons and adult children of adopted persons and unrestricted access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate to birth parents, birth grandparents, siblings and other birth relatives when the adopted person reaches age 18."

Mr Speaker, this petition goes on, but I will sign my name in support of it.

1510

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology; and

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres; and

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a \$40-million cut in funding already imposed on Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement with the petition.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of the province of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is cutting waste and duplication in the education system and refocusing education resources back into the classrooms where they belong; and

"Whereas the new student-focused funding formula defines and protects classroom spending; and

"Whereas the new formula will result in a \$583-million increase in spending in classrooms by the year 2000; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has committed to maintaining spending for the next three years on supply teachers, classroom supplies, computers, professionals, paraprofessionals and staff development for the Toronto District School Board. There will be no cuts in the classrooms except for the ones made by the board's trustees themselves; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is increasing spending on classroom teachers and library and guidance services to the TDSB in each of the next three years, by \$45 million this year, a further \$20 million next year and a further \$17 million the year after; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has brought equity in education funding so that all students, no matter whether they attend a public or separate school, will be treated equally; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board will have \$33 million more to spend this year in the classroom, thanks to the Mike Harris government's new education funding formula; and

"Whereas the Toronto District School Board has already announced it will be hiring 400 new teachers this year; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has announced it will be hiring 340 new teachers this year;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed with fulfilling the commitments made in the Common Sense Revolution and continuing to pursue policies which will make Ontario the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1998 LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 82, An Act to strengthen environmental protection and enforcement / Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à affermir la protection de l'environnement et les mesures d'exécution à cet égard.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm pleased to rise today on this piece of legislation. Let me begin by saying that, like my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and our party, I support this bill.

The Ministry of the Environment needs every tool available to help it crack down on companies and individuals polluting our environment. But as I look at the Minister of the Environment across the way, I must tell

you that I envision Napoleon with his hand in his vest, but I envision Napoleon without a horse. Can you imagine our Minister of the Environment getting all of these great new tools to help clean up our environment, yet he doesn't have the horses, he doesn't have the bodies, he doesn't have what he needs to make them work?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): More like Humpty-Dumpty. Doesn't have the king's horses or the king's men.

Mr Duncan: More like Humpty-Dumpty. He's going to fall off the wall and all the king's horses and all the king's men won't put Normie back together again.

I should pause and pay tribute to my colleague from Algoma for his private member's bill, which as I understand it is the precursor to this and is contained almost in its entirety. Like my colleague, I wonder why it's taken the government two years to bring this forward.

By way of background, I'd like to remind you that this bill will amend the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act, the Pesticides Act and the Highway Traffic Act to provide the ministry with new regulatory tools to track, convict and penalize Ontario polluters.

As I say, the tools will be there in the legislation and in the regulations. I guess the problem we have to debate in the Legislature as part of the debate on this bill is, if you don't have the inspectors, if you don't have the ministry apparatus, how are you going to make it work?

All of us in public life, whether we serve at the municipal level, the provincial level or the federal level, know that all the good laws in the world, all the good pieces of legislation in the world won't work if you don't have the tools, the mechanisms with which to enforce them.

Let's talk about some of the key elements in the bill. It proposes to raise fines and impose jail terms for polluters. It will provide the ministry with more powers to force individuals and companies that organize illegal waste dumping to pay for the cleanup. They will seize licence plates and permits from vehicles used to commit environmental offences, and secure areas and facilities to ensure evidence is protected. It will extend provisions for control of illegal dumping and cleanup for the people who broker illegal waste disposal. They will use more modern investigative techniques such as tracking equipment.

As I say, however, the bill will be useless unless these powers are backed up by an adequate number of Ministry of the Environment inspectors and enforcement staff to enforce tough environmental regulations.

I'd like to spend a few minutes on these issues. I must remind the House that this government's record since taking office has been one of cutting the Ministry of the Environment, by almost two thirds. I'll review some of those statistics and figures with members of the House. I'm going to try to put them in the context of my community, Windsor, where we have continual problems with the environment, problems, by the way, that are intricately linked to health care.

I recall the Conners Creek situation in Detroit last year, and I recall the quality of our water. I recall, for instance, the cuts to our own Ministry of the Environment office in Windsor, which now see us effectively without our own local office and having to rely on Sarnia and other offices to help enforce the provisions of the various acts I spoke about earlier.

In a very real sense, my community, Windsor, has been affected. I'd like to remind members of the House, who I know are taken up with the responsibilities of their own constituencies, of a couple of things. The incidence of lung cancer in my community, Windsor, is higher than elsewhere. There are all kinds of problems associated with our environment that are somewhat unique. We see all kinds of situations that need cleanup, for which funding hasn't been available.

In my community, Windsor, we are faced with special problems related to the environment. When you cut our inspectors, indeed when you cut the monitoring stations — I remind the members of the government that the provincial minister wrote to the federal minister and they wrote to the state officials in Michigan and to the Environmental Protection Agency officials in Washington when Conners Creek was set to re-fire, and everybody wanted action taken. What the minister forgot to remind people of at the time was that our monitoring stations had been closed down in Windsor, so we couldn't monitor the effluent that was coming across the river to Windsor from Detroit.

We have to view Bill 82 in the context of the government's overall record on the environment. I'd like to read some very fascinating quotes that have occurred over the years, then I'd like to review some very basic statistics, and then I'd like to review some of the government's other legislative initiatives that have impacted on the environment.

I'm going to begin by reviewing some quotes. Here's one from Mike Harris. It's taken out of the *Toronto Star*, dated June 5, 1995. It says: "I don't think you'll find a cent there to cut out of the environment. We were able to find \$6 billion in cuts to government spending without cutting the environment." It reminds me of the promise not to close hospitals. I remember very well that in the leader's debate the Premier said, and I'm paraphrasing now, "It's not our plan to close hospitals." Where are we at now? We're at 39 and counting.

Again, in May 1995, "It's not our plan to close hospitals"; in 1998, today, it's 39 and counting. At about that same time, the then leader of the third party, today's Premier Mike Harris, said: "I don't think you'll find a cent there to cut out of the environment. We were able to find \$6 billion in cuts to government spending without cutting the environment." Well, that was then and this is now.

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I'd like to read another quote, this one from Eva Ligeti, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, in her 1996 annual report to the Legislature. It says: "And if we continue along this path, our right to a healthy environ-

ment will be jeopardized.... We cannot afford to focus on short-term savings at the expense of long-term environmental health."

I guess that's part of the difficulty I've had with some of the initiatives of this government, whether it be in education, whether it be in health care, whether it be in environment, this notion of short-term pain for long-term gain. That, I think, is at the root of what the government would like to have us believe. Unfortunately, in my view, they have mismanaged the effort to get a balanced budget. They have mismanaged the provincial treasury. The timing of their tax cut was all wrong. They should have taken a note out of the federal Liberal handbook and balanced the budget first and then looked at tax cuts so we wouldn't have the kinds of cuts to the Ministry of the Environment that we've seen, certainly not to the extent we've seen.

Unfortunately, with the environment, with health care and education, if you make a mistake the first time, you can't get it back, because there are children who are affected in schools and there are patients in hospitals. With respect to our environment, once that environment is polluted, those who have tried to deal with remedial solutions to clean things up know how difficult and expensive that is. So when the government boasts next year, as it will in its budget, that they have achieved a balanced budget, there will be a cost, and the environment is one area where we can directly link problems associated with budget cuts.

I have an interesting quote here from our minister, Mr Sterling, from the *Globe and Mail* dated October 16, 1996.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Is that the Niagara Escarpment Commission?

Mr Duncan: I'm going to have that quote in a few moments, but first, he says, "We lose 1,800 Ontarians (a year) prematurely" as a result of air pollution. Eighteen hundred Ontarians, and then it took them two more years to look at car exhaust, exhaust fumes, and try in a program to reduce those, after lots of good announcements early on. That's what Mr Sterling said.

Then I found a quote from the Provincial Auditor in his 1996 report to the Legislature. In order to properly safeguard the ecosystem and human health, he recommends that the ministry update its standards for air pollutants, improve its monitoring efforts in the areas of air, water and hazardous waste materials, and develop a more proactive and systematic approach to protecting and managing groundwater.

Mr David Caplan (Orillia): Didn't he say that in 1998 as well?

Mr Duncan: I believe he may have said that again in 1998. The Provincial Auditor is not exactly a tax-and-spend Liberal, is he? He's saying to the government that this is a trust that you have, and you have an obligation to make it work because once that environment is polluted, once it's no longer clean, it's not that easy to get it back.

I have an interesting quote from the *Hamilton Spectator* dated February 18, 1998. When told that Ontario businesses are flushing hundreds of thousands of tonnes of

hazardous waste down municipal sewers, Norm Sterling's response was "What else do you do with this material?" What else do you do with this material? Part of the job of the Minister of the Environment is to figure out what to do with the material in a manner that will minimize the negative impacts that this kind of procedure can have on our environment.

On April 31, 1996, the World Wildlife Fund gave Ontario a grade of F on its efforts to protect ecologically significant areas of the province. Even Alberta received a B.

Bill 82 is another of those famous government bills that's long on rhetoric and makes a lot of commitments to improving the environment and changing regulations, changes frankly we will support as we will support this bill, but we have to continue to remember that for legislation to work, it has to be enforceable.

Let's review a little bit of what this government has done in the area of the environment, first on the staffing level. When this government took office in 1995, the ministry had approximately 2,400 jobs, 2,400 people working within the Ministry of the Environment to help protect the environment, to help enforce the laws of our Ministry of the Environment, to help enforce the regulations of that ministry. What did the government do? It cut 880 of them, 36%. The government will tell you we had a burgeoning bureaucracy and we could be more efficient, but what that translated to was shutting down regional offices in my community, in Windsor for instance, where we all acknowledge there are special problems associated with pollution.

What about the budget for the Ministry of the Environment? There was \$286 million in cuts in their operating budget in 1994-95 and a total operating budget cut of 42% since this government took office. Again, government members will stand up and argue that, "We're doing more with less," and that's simply not the case; you're doing less with less. You do not have the means by which you will be able to enforce the provisions of Bill 82, because you had much different priorities. This government can find it in its heart to settle legal settlements of \$400,000, but it can't find the money to staff up the Ministry of the Environment. You have \$47 million of government money, taxpayers' dollars, for your ads, and all you have for the Ministry of the Environment are 42% cuts.

In addition to the Ministry of the Environment, we've seen 2,100 jobs cut out of the Ministry of Natural Resources. That's a 43% cut. In terms of budget cuts, 31%. The government's record is abysmal. The government has systematically stripped its own ability to enforce the very provisions that are contained in Bill 82 and will become part of the law of the province. They talk a good game, but they don't deliver.

I'd like to spend my remaining time reviewing a few more things this government has done and a few other quotes. Let's take, for instance, NAFTA's Commission for Environmental Co-operation report, Taking Stock, which finds that Ontario produces the third-largest amount

of pollution out of all US states and Canadian provinces, more than New York, Michigan or California, and while we're finding this out, we're cutting our ability to enforce our own laws.

It makes it very difficult when we have to fight Conners Creek in Detroit, when we have to look at what we call the toxic hot spots in Michigan, to go with a straight face and ask them to do a better job when we have a provincial government in this province that has done what it has done in cutting our ability to enforce our environmental standards.

I forgot to mention that the compliance and enforcement branch of this ministry was cut by 30% or \$15 million, so directly related, here we have a bill that proposes to toughen up our laws, but at the same time we do that, we don't have the means by which to enforce.

The inspection and enforcement cuts have resulted in a drop in charges against polluters: 683 charges were laid against polluters in the first 10 months of 1996 compared with 1,037 in all of 1995, a 21% reduction. Fines dropped 57%. That's taken out of the *Globe and Mail*, January 10, 1997.

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The ministry's ability to prosecute has been reduced from 10 staff in 1990 to four in 1996. So, even if the government had the monitoring equipment to monitor, the inspectors to follow up and then charges laid, it simply does not have the means by which it can prosecute.

The number of water monitoring stations has fallen from 700 in 1991 to just over 200 in 1996. You can't monitor the quality of our water and you can't monitor the quality of our air. Even if you could, you don't have the prosecutors available to take it through court.

There's a 40% reduction in laboratory services. They've eliminated the three regional labs, Thunder Bay, Kingston and London, and there's a reduction of jobs at the lone remaining Toronto lab — a total reduction of 106 jobs. Aside from the obvious consequences to those individuals, what does this mean? It means, again, if you don't have the monitoring stations, you don't have the labs to analyze it, you don't have the inspectors to go out and you don't have the prosecutors, it's no wonder that the charges you lay go down. It's no wonder, and shouldn't be a surprise to anybody, that under this government one very simple message is clear: The environment is getting dirtier, and they've got no way of enforcing the provisions that are contained in Bill 82.

All of these changes have taken the better part of three and a half years. I think all of us are prepared to look at ways of doing things better, of making better use of the resources we have. But you simply cannot expect to have a ministry, a government organization that can enforce meaningful environmental standards when you're cutting to the depth that you see being cut here.

I say to the government, we support the provisions contained in Bill 82. We will vote in favour of the bill. But we have not lost sight of the fact that you do not have the resources to enable yourself to enforce them. That's the sad record of the Harris government.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): In response to the member for Windsor-Walkerville, I think he hit the nail on the head, and I'll address this more in a few minutes when I speak at length to this bill before us today, and that is the issue of the cuts and the deregulation that have taken place in this government, in the Ministry of the Environment and indeed in the Ministry of Natural Resources over the last three years. It has been pointed out by members from the opposition since this bill was introduced and, in truth, since the day the government started to make these massive cuts and deregulation across the province.

It's all very well to bring forward a much-needed bill, and we all agree that this is a good bill, but we want to hear the minister stand up and put, literally in this case, his money where his mouth is and make sure that the money that has been taken out of the area of monitoring and enforcement be put back. Otherwise, this is a great piece of legislation, which incidentally was put forward first by my colleague the member for Algoma when we were in government. All the research and work was done then —

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Did anybody give him any credit?

Ms Churley: Yes, in fact the government has been very fair in giving my colleague the member for Algoma credit for this. I guess the question is, why did it take so long, till the eve of an election almost, to bring it forward?

We're calling on the government today, as my party says, "Yes, we will support this bill," saying that we need to have the commitment that the enforcement is there to make it more than pretty words on a piece of paper. The kinds of activities we have seen taking place in this province since the deregulation, the kinds of things that have come up in this House: We've had a member of the Conservative government appeal to the Minister of the Environment not to enforce some laws because he was going to change it under the Red Tape Commission.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It was most interesting to hear the presentations from the member for Windsor-Walkerville and some of the responses from the member for Riverdale when they talk about money and reduction. Obviously, we can understand why they would talk about money. They're the ones who spent and really didn't worry about anything other than spending, building the debt and letting the deficit go. They've thrown money at literally everything from the environment to education and so on, and what has it accomplished? What it's done for us is a great big debt.

This bill is about improving enforcement without putting a whole lot of people out there to do the monitoring. For example, by putting a tracer either on the vehicle or in the load, they're able to follow where it's going and where it's moving. Before, it would take five or six people to constantly monitor one of these loads, where it's going, what's going to end up happening to it; with this kind of legislation we're going to be able to monitor that kind of movement, particularly of hazardous materials. When you

get right down to it, that's what we're concerned about, the hazardous materials — yes, and some of the other, non-hazardous waste which we want to go to the right place, but we're zeroing in on the priority, the really hazardous material. That's what's important and we'll be able to put in, by this legislation, that kind of tracer and follow it.

We're increasing the penalties to ensure that people, especially the polluters, will pay attention. There's something like \$10 million on the books that were charged by the previous two governments. Sure, great charges, but they haven't collected it. It's sitting on the books. What good is laying charges if you don't have the teeth to go out and actually collect and make sure you get it?

It's really difficult to follow some of the comments they're making, but I can assure you that with this bill the polluters will be followed and they will pay.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I'd first of all like to congratulate the member for Windsor-Walkerville, our critic in this area, on the excellent speech he gave.

Whenever the member for Northumberland gets up, within about two minutes he can literally destroy everything that has been said before that, or he tries to, anyway. He talked about something like enforcement without necessarily having enforcement officers. I don't know how you enforce any kind of rule and regulation if you don't have anybody enforcing it. Does he just feel that all of a sudden the polluters out there, because we have a law, are going to say: "Well, we'd better not do it any more. We know there are no enforcement officers out there, but after all, the province has passed a law"? It doesn't work that way in reality.

In reality, we know that this government has cut \$121 million out of the Ministry of the Environment, some 42% of its budget. It has reduced the enforcement or the compliance staff from 97 individuals to 70 people in the province. Let's just hear what some of our own officers who are hired by this Legislative Assembly, by you and me and all the other members, have to say about this. This is the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, which we believe is a very important office. What does she say? She said: "If we continue along this path, our right to a healthy environment will be jeopardized. We cannot afford to focus on short-term savings at the expense of long-term environmental health." She has basically condemned this government for all the negative actions that it's taken in the field of environment.

I say to the member for Northumberland, you cannot possibly have the best law in the world without the necessary enforcement element to make sure people out there, particularly the polluters, adhere to the law.

Mr Wildman: I want to thank the member for Windsor-Walkerville for his presentation and also his kind remarks regarding my private member's bill.

I must say that I am more than a little bit concerned by my friend from Northumberland's comments. He seems to be following a sort of Mackenzie King dictum: enforcement if necessary but not necessarily enforcement.

Basically what he's saying is that under this bill it'll be possible to monitor by putting a tracker on a truck and monitor where the truck is going, but he doesn't think it necessary, as a matter of fact he's opposed to hiring the staff to go after that truck if it's found that it isn't going where it is supposed to be going. The ministry hasn't got the staff to do it, but the member for Northumberland says, when it's suggested that monitors and enforcement officers be hired, that that is "Spend, spend, spend," and that's not a good idea.

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The member for Northumberland is trying, like Mackenzie King, to have it both ways. He's trying to say, "Conscription if necessary, but not necessarily conscription." He's trying to say we can have better penalties or enforceable laws, we can prevent illegal dumping, without having the staff to do the work. It's ridiculous. This government has had sort of a Saul-like conversion on the road to Damascus, although I would call this a Norm conversion on the road to the election, in that they are bringing in a bill to say they are going to do something to get tough on polluters, but unless they hire the staff to do the enforcement, it won't mean anything.

The Deputy Speaker: It's my understanding that the comments and questions are to relate to the person who has deliberated in the debate. With that little bit of instruction, I would ask the member for Windsor-Walkerville to respond.

Mr Duncan: To the member for Northumberland, I can only say again, you can't have it both ways. You can't say, "We want better enforcement," and not have the tools by which to do it.

I want to follow up on the conversion on the road to Damascus. Biblical scholars will recall what happens to those who don't have the conversion: They turn to a pillar of salt. That is what the Minister of the Environment is in this mug's game, isn't he? It's a pillar of salt, because it's not really a conversion. He hasn't seen the light. What he has seen, with all due respect, is a cut to the resources of his ministry, a cut to the staff, a cut in his ability to enforce, a cut in his ability to prosecute. Really, while we can support this Bill 82, nothing will happen until there is a change of government that will commit the resources, the time and the energy necessary to make these provisions that are going to be part of the four statutes we talked about earlier in order to have the tools necessary to enforce them.

It's really a sad legacy that this government will leave when it leaves office next year. It's a sad legacy to the environment, and it's another one of those messes that will have to be cleaned up properly. They will leave office next year, and their record and their legacy will be one of increased pollution and decreased enforcement, and one that really takes for granted our natural heritage in this province, whether it be environmental issues or natural resource issues. We look forward to this government's legacy being ended. It will be, and the proper enforcement mechanisms will be put in place.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to share my leadoff time with the member for Hamilton Centre.

The Deputy Speaker: That is unnecessary.

Ms Churley: Well, I will be sharing my time with the member for Hamilton Centre in that case.

I want to start by reiterating what I believe a couple of members of my caucus, including one of our former ministers of the environment, the member for Algoma, said the other night when this bill was being debated. I want to thank the members for allowing me to give my leadoff speech today, because as the member for Algoma said that night, I was busy playing elf to Santa Claus, who was our esteemed Speaker, for the party. It was a good party, I must say, and we had a lot of fun. In the meantime, I want to thank the members who were here doing their duty and speaking sort of on my behalf that night.

I want to reiterate and say again that my caucus is supporting this bill. Obviously we're supporting the bill. It is not word for word, but most of the ideas in this bill, the research that was done, came from the time when the NDP was in government and it was very clear that this illegal dumping in particular was a problem. At that time, in 1993, our government initiated a crackdown on illegal dumping and started the process. We started a special task force which launched a whole series of investigations into what was happening and started an inspection program for trucks hauling the waste. But it was very clear that the ministry officials did not have the tools they needed under the law to crack down and really enforce.

The legislation was brought forward by the member for Algoma while we were in government, and then, because an election was called before it came into law, he reintroduced the same bill and had all-party support. We kept waiting for the government of the day, the Harris government, to bring that bill forward. They kept saying they didn't need to bring in Mr Wildman's private member's bill because they were going to do it. Well, at long last, here we are debating this bill.

I'm happy to have it before us. I think it's a good bill. I must say, it is not often in this House, in fact it's probably the first time — and I hope not the last time — that I have had the opportunity to stand in this House and tell the government that I think they're doing a good thing.

Mr Marchese: Oh, God, that's hard.

Ms Churley: No, it's not hard. I believe it is our job as opposition to criticize but also to congratulate when the government is doing something right, and in this case they are doing something right. It is my job to let them know that's a fact, and I am very happy to see this legislation come forward.

Mr Marchese: Stealing things.

Ms Churley: Stealing things? If they want to steal good ideas, all the better. Again, I would say it's a good thing. When one government is defeated and some good legislation is left on the books, why start all over again? The issue is that in this case it appeared the government just let it sit there for a long time when it was ready to go,

and in the meantime this illegal dumping continued without the government being able to initiate some of the initiatives in this bill because they didn't have the tools. I'm happy that the government is now coming forward with the bill and we will soon have the ability to actually enforce the bill put forward by my colleague from Algoma some time ago.

The problem has been pointed out, and simply must be pointed out again, because, as I said, I consider it my job as the critic for the environment for the NDP caucus to congratulate the government when they do something right and something good for the environment for a change, but also to talk about my concerns.

In this case, unfortunately, I have a great deal of concern, for the same reasons that every member of my party who has spoken to this bill has already mentioned — and by the way, not just the opposition parties in the House. I know the government does not like to listen to the opposition. It's made it very clear it doesn't listen to anybody except its big business friends. However, just for the record, you must be well aware that it's not just the opposition criticizing this government for its pitiful environmental record.

We have had report after report come forward over the past few years telling the government how bad its environmental record is and how it is negatively affecting our environment and our health. There have been reports from the North American Commission for Environmental Co-operation; from CELA, the Canadian Environmental Law Association; from the Commission for Environmental Cooperation; from the Environmental Commissioner for Ontario; from the OMA, the Ontario Medical Association; from the International Joint Commission; the Acidifying Emissions Task Group of the National Air Issues Coordinating Committee; the North East States for Coordinated Air Use Management; and the University of Toronto. That's to name some of the reports. There's also the Ontario auditor, who has been mentioned in this House. The David Suzuki Foundation recently came out — some of these reports have been quite specific on air pollution and some of them have run the gamut, have gone through in great detail this government's pitiful environmental record.

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What they all say and what all of these reports have in common is that the amount of deregulation, the amount of self-regulation and the massive cuts to both the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources have had a really negative effect on the ministry to do what it's supposed to do, that is, to protect the environment, to protect other species, to protect our parks and to protect the health of Ontarians.

It has been well documented by now that this government, unlike any other government for the past 20 or 30 years, has actually done things to harm the environment. Over the years, past governments — and we're going back to Conservative governments, then a Liberal government for one term and then the NDP government — all made improvements to the environmental agenda. This

is the first government since the environment ministry came into being that has actually been regressive and has done things that hurt the ability of the Ministry of the Environment to do its job, that is, to protect the environment.

Since this government came into power it has dismantled or watered down 13 laws and over 80 regulations, and they've weakened standards incredibly. The Provincial Auditor, for instance, talked about over 120 air quality standards that need to be upgraded. Two years ago, the minister said that things would be done in 12 months, including the Drive Clean program. Then this year the Provincial Auditor came back and had to say the same thing all over again. It was pointed out in his last report that they still haven't done a thing.

The government, particularly the Minister of the Environment, likes to say when questioned about this: "Why didn't you guys do anything? You were in power all these years. Why didn't you do something about air quality?" I'm going to put it on the record now that in fact we did. We brought in the pilot project for the Drive Clean program, for the vehicle emissions testing, and we were going to make it a mandatory program.

On top of that, and this is widely forgotten in discussions about air quality, we did a massive rewriting of the Planning Act. We had John Sewell and Toby Vigod, then with CELA, and others go out and travel the province. It was, all in all, a two-year process, incredible consultation, and it came up with more or less a consensus on a new Planning Act. How does this Planning Act fit into air quality? It fits in because the whole exercise, or part of the exercise, was to do something about urban sprawl, because the more urban sprawl you have, the more you need —

Mr Galt: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if you could extend an invitation to the Liberal Party to have somebody join us in the House. I see all their chairs are empty.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Indeed it's not parliamentary to point out the absence of other members.

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Speaker: Would you please check for a quorum in this place.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you please check for a quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Riverdale.

Ms Churley: The land use policy relates to air quality, because if it's good land use policy it will discourage urban sprawl. What this government did was immediately repeal the new Planning Act. Not only did they repeal it, they went backwards. They went, not back to the law that was on the books before we brought in the new Planning Act, but way back, and made it even more regressive. This new bill actually encourages urban sprawl. At the same

time the government did that, they cut subsidies to public transportation. When you put these two things together, it adds, in a massive way, to air pollution when it comes to automobile usage.

The other thing we did when we were in government was to start the process called green communities. We started the whole process of engaging communities in programs that encouraged energy conservation and energy efficiency. That too is a major component of the problems which cause air pollution. We are terrible wasters of energy in Ontario, and that has been well documented, one of the worst in the world. One of the ways we can clean up our air and air pollution is to have programs in place and encourage communities and business to engage in programs that save energy. What did this government do? They threw those programs out at the same time, so there's nothing left on the books to encourage industry and households to save energy.

Not only that, but they have — had, I should say — an opportunity with the new hydro bill to bring in incentives and make sure that alternative, cleaner forms of energy were brought on stream. There were committee hearings, and I sat on some of them. That was an opportunity — is an opportunity — that may not come our way again for a very long time, but the government completely blew that opportunity. Now the fear is that with more of the privatization of Hydro, more of the private sector being brought in, our air is going to get worse as a result. The government missed a big opportunity to make those necessary changes. I understand that there are still some regulation changes coming and there's a possibility that some of those regulations will be there. There are organizations out there fighting very hard to make sure that happens, and I'm calling on the government to do that today.

As I said earlier, the problem with the bill we have before us is not the wording of the bill itself; it's the fact that the government has cut the ministry to the bone. During 1998-99, the Ministry of the Environment will have lost 45% of its operating budget and — get this — 81% of its capital budget. The government has fired at least 880 staff, and the compliance and enforcement branch has been cut by 30%. That relates directly to the bill we're talking about today.

We already know that with the existing laws, the ones that haven't been completely gutted, the ministry is having trouble monitoring and enforcing these laws. That's why fines are down so much. They don't have the ability to catch people, so they're getting away scot-free. Now we're hearing, after about 13,000 jobs have already been cut in the civil service, that they're musing aloud about cutting another 16,000 jobs.

The cut to the MOE of \$121 million is the largest cut, on a percentage basis, of any ministry in this government. Now when we hear about another possible 16,000 jobs out the window, you know what we're very afraid of? That a whole bunch more of those jobs are going to come from the Ministry of the Environment. This government has shown time and time again that it has no interest in

protecting the environment, that the interest is to play the game, say the right words and say: "We're doing more with less. The opposition just spent and spent and didn't do anything."

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Well, in fact we did do a lot. There's evidence of that all around us these days. I attended a press conference this morning where people were announcing that they're taking the government to court, or at least trying to force the government, on the Lands for Life process, which was a very flawed process — the government did not listen to the people; it's a complete giveaway to industry — to make that process go before a full EA. When I say EA, that means environmental assessment.

I can't mention environmental assessment, though, without mentioning that some time ago one of the other things this government did was gut the environmental assessment process. At least they left it in place, but the heart and soul have been cut right out of it. What made the EA process so important to people and so important to us, to our communities, is that in an environmental process things like alternatives to the undertaking, alternatives to the site, need — all of that had to be looked at. If it was not very relevant, it wouldn't be looked at for very long. But what this government did is change that process, so now at the very front it can be scoped.

We saw that up north with the garbage haul to Kirkland Lake, that whole process of shipping Toronto's garbage to Kirkland Lake, which our government outlawed. We said, and still believe, that as soon as you start shipping your garbage far, far away, then it's out of sight, out of mind. It's irresponsible. It takes away the need to fully engage in the three Rs. This government had a so-called environmental assessment process that left the public out and scoped it down basically to the hole in the ground, in this case this massive mine. It is going to have an impact on the land and the water in that area for a thousand years. The people there don't want it. The environmental assessment is completely flawed now when it can be scoped to just that one issue.

On top of that, they got rid of intervenor funding. Not only is the EA process gutted, there is now no longer intervenor funding so communities can get involved. Intervenor funding was supplied by the Attorney General, or at least the law in place. The money wasn't; that's the interesting thing about this. It was administered by the Attorney General, but it was the industry, the proponent, who would have to pay out certain amounts of money so the community could be involved in protecting their own health in their own communities. So not only is the environmental assessment gutted, but the possibility for communities to be involved in the process is severely limited.

On top of that — and I don't think the public knows a whole lot about this. You may recall that recently Bill 68, the Legal Aid Services Act, 1998, was introduced and went to committee. On the whole, people are supporting it, but one of the issues raised by the Canadian Environmental Law Association was that in the definition of

"clinic law," environment was left out. It's our understanding that environment was one of the definitions, and there's all kinds of evidence that links environment and poverty.

I come from the community of Riverdale. Years ago in south Riverdale, a very working-class area, was a lead plant. Children were being poisoned by lead. It took years and years to get governments to listen, and finally they did. By that time, for many children it was too late. But there is a direct connection between poverty and environment, and it's really critical that poorer communities, especially without intervenor funding now, have access to CELA, those kinds of environmental lawyers and legal firms — who, incidentally, don't make pockets of money; they're on salary and they're there to help those communities. Well, now what has happened, we heard the environment was included in that definition and it has been taken out. We want to know why. Who wanted it out?

Perhaps the parliamentary assistant can tell us later why environment was taken off that list. We want it put back in. We want the government to say it is committed to making sure that for poor communities who need environmental lawyers to assist them in legal processes, that money through the legal aid system is there for them. It's very interesting. It's one more thing on top of the government's charging an arm and a leg to get information through the Freedom of Information Act. It's very difficult now for communities to become involved and know what's going on.

Coming back to some of the things our government did, the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, for instance, which came in under our government —

Interjection.

Ms Churley: The member for Dufferin-Peel supports that, I believe. I remember at the time that our leader, Howard Hampton, who was then the Minister of Natural Resources, brought it in. There was some criticism at the time that it might not have any teeth. In fact, that proved to be wrong. There have been several occasions now where environmental groups out there have used that act and have taken the government to court on the basis of that act, have said that the government was contravening the act and won, on more than one occasion. Environmental groups in communities have successfully used the Environmental Bill of Rights to demand and get reviews of environmental initiatives which have been placed on the register to force the government to review it.

Some of these structures that our government put in place thankfully are still there. At least there are some tools the communities can still use to try to keep this government from completely stepping away from its responsibilities to protect the environment. But when you have a situation where standards have been cut or have been watered down and all kinds of laws taken away, and when you have a situation where the member for Lincoln, who was in charge of the Red Tape Commission, goes to the Minister of the Environment — and this is documented

— and asks the Minister of the Environment to not charge certain companies with breaking the law because —

Mr Marchese: He wrote a letter?

Ms Churley: Yes, he wrote a letter asking the minister to not do it because "Hey, our Red Tape Commission is recommending that those laws be changed anyway, so don't charge them."

I think that's a scandal. I think that's outrageous. Those are laws, provincial laws, that were being broken. When you have a member of the government who is appointed, who is he accountable to? He was appointed to that position and then asked the Minister of the Environment in a letter to not make — I think it's a scandal. I think it's just incredible that he got away with that.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Come on.

Ms Churley: It's true. He did it. I can assure you that it's out of order.

Mr Galt: It must have been back in the early 1990s.

Ms Churley: This was just very recent. You should look into that, to the member for Northumberland. You should look into that because it's a very serious charge being made here, and I think he shouldn't get away with it.

We have a situation where, for instance, water quality laws are still in place but in 1991 we had 700 water monitoring stations across Ontario and now there are 200. Air quality: 40% of the air monitoring stations are gone, closed. There is going to be — at least, so far the government has made noises about it — deregulation of hazardous waste. That's a whole interesting subject I could spend some time on. Coming back specifically to the bill before us, this mostly deals with waste management and the illegal dumping of waste. There's some real concern about the watering down of hazardous waste laws, which is what this government is proposing.

We have another situation in Hamilton: the Taro landfill. There are lots of investigations going on of serious dumping of very hazardous waste coming in from the United States into a landfill there. That is a severe health hazard. How many other dumps across the province are having the same thing happen? We don't know. Again, the government does not have the people, the front-line workers, any more to do the monitoring, to do the inspections, to do the enforcement.

The reports that have recently come forward — there are pages and pages of documentation of the impacts on our health of deregulation and the cuts across the province. Again in Hamilton — and the member for Hamilton I'm sure will be speaking to this in a few moments — is the Plastimet fire, which is an absolute disgrace. It's unbelievable that the government would not allow an independent investigation of that terrible situation. I would think that the government would want to know if their cuts did have an impact on being able to respond to that situation, that they'd want to know and be able to fix it so it won't happen again. The scary thing, however, is not only that they will not investigate it, but their proposed laws, which would allow more Plastimet fires to happen again. While they're being asked by the fire chief of Hamilton and many others to tighten up the laws in terms

of recycling and storing of those kinds of waste, they are loosening the laws, which will make it easier. So we're afraid that down the road there are going to be more Plastimet fires.

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What I would ask the government, in our support of the bill today, is that it's not good enough for the minister, whom I believe is sincere and feels very proud of this piece of legislation, as he should — the parliamentary assistant is always outrageous in his response. He stands up and says: "Spend, spend, spend. We're doing more with less." Every report that has come out shows the opposite, that all across this province the deregulation and cuts and the lack of monitoring and enforcement are hurting our environment. The government is not doing more with less; it's doing less with less.

Now we're at a point in our history where we're seeing more and more connection between our health and the environment. We're not talking any more about tree-huggers; we're talking about our very health. We're seeing more and more cancers in the workplace, more and more breast cancer, more and more prostate cancer across this province, indeed across the land. We're seeing more and more the connection between the environment — there are thousands of chemicals in our environment; there are thousands of substances in our environment that there's more and more evidence are causing cancer, which I would consider to be a crisis at this point. I'll bet there isn't a member in this Legislature who has not been in some way touched by cancer.

We can no longer just take the position that we'll spend money on treating cancer after the fact. Of course, we have to do that and we have to do more. It's disgraceful that people are having to wait so long. Can you imagine what it must be like to be diagnosed with cancer and then to have to wait weeks or even months to move on to the next stage and get the treatment started? But what we have to concentrate on and look at is the connection between the environment and cancer.

I had a private member's bill passed by all parties in this House two years ago. That was taking one piece, one aspect of the report on cancer prevention which was undertaken by Ruth Grier, the Minister of Health when we were in government. Experts from the field in all kinds of areas did this tremendous report which is now sitting on the shelf. There are all kinds of good recommendations in it, and it's going nowhere. There is no money for cancer prevention; there is no will to do work on cancer prevention. It's just sitting there. I had just one piece of that large report passed by the House in a resolution, that the government put together a stakeholders' committee to start the process of phasing out or eliminating persistent toxic substances which are suspected or known carcinogens which can lead to cancer.

There was all-party support for that, and it was easy to support that day, but it's going nowhere. Nobody is taking the initiative. I've tried to meet in the past with different ministers of the environment, the ministers of health, and nobody will even meet with me about it. But we cannot

keep our heads in the sand for much longer on this issue. The connection between health and the environment now is compelling, and it's something we absolutely have to start dealing with.

When the parliamentary assistant says, "We're doing more with less," that the opposition just talks about, "Spend, spend, spend," and you don't need these people to enforce, unfortunately it isn't that simple. If it were, if they could find a way to seriously do this work to complement the bill we're debating today, I would have no problem. But all the evidence to date, since they have laid off so many staff, points to the fact that there aren't enough staff there to do what's on the books at the moment.

So then you bring in another bill, a comprehensive bill which will deal with a very important problem, and that is mostly dealing with illegal dumping of waste, which has caused tremendous problems for people. You have had situations where somebody has illegally dumped perhaps even hazardous waste, in many cases hazardous waste, on to somebody else's property. That person would then be responsible for cleaning up that waste. We would all agree that is irresponsible and unfair, and this bill indeed does fix that problem, but again, if you do not have the staff, how are you going to enforce it?

What worries me, and I believe other people have pointed this out as well, is that good players, the industries that are good corporate citizens, want good regulation. They want an even playing field, and we all know why: because the bad apples will cause lots of problems. They will go out and undercut the industries playing by the rules and will be able to do things cheaper because they're doing it illegally or under the table. It makes it harder for the good players to get the business. We all know why good industries, good corporate citizens, want a level playing field.

The problem is, when you bring in new laws like this and you're not backing them up with enforcement and monitoring and all of that, it's meaningless. Not only is it meaningless; it's dangerous. It gives the impression that it's OK to flout the law. You've got laws, but when there's nobody enforcing them, why bother?

I think you can make the analogy to people who run red lights and why it's so important that the government finally caved to our demands for red-light cameras so that the people who do that will be aware — they won't all stop, for sure — that now they can be caught. The reason why so many people were running red lights is because they knew they could get away with it.

It's the same thing in any field. When you have environmental laws, just like when you have any other kinds of laws, and you don't have the ability to enforce, to monitor, to keep an eye on it, to charge the fines, to collect the fines, the law becomes meaningless. It makes it very difficult for the good players who are obeying the law and trying to be good corporate citizens and watching others undercut them by ignoring the law because they know they can get away with it.

The good thing about this bill before us today is that it vastly increases the fines. That's great, because the bad apples now can no longer see it as a part of doing business, which is what they used to do. We all know that. It's one of the reasons why my colleague from Algoma recommended vastly increasing the fines. But again, those players who are the bad apples, who have been getting away with that, will continue to get away with it if there's nobody to monitor their activities and know that they are dumping these wastes illegally.

I would like to hear a commitment from the parliamentary assistant today, who is here in the House, that his government will put extra enforcement, will bring back the people they've laid off and assure us that this bill, which the whole House is supporting, can actually be enforced. Without that commitment, it is not worth the piece of paper that it's written on.

My fear, as has been expressed by others, is that this is sort of a dying last gasp by this government, realizing, I'm sure, in its polls — the environment has never been a huge priority for this government. In fact, I don't think it was even mentioned in the Common Sense Revolution document. But I remember Mike Harris promising that they'd cut all this money and give the tax cut and get rid of the deficit but they wouldn't cut a cent from the environment. Remember that? Another promise broken.

Interjection: Did he say that?

Ms Churley: He did say that, and look at all they've cut out of the Ministry of the Environment.

This is an extremely serious issue that we're talking about today, because what we have in front of us —

Mr Froese: You haven't got enough material.

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Ms Churley: Oh, no, I could talk for hours about the deregulation. I'm trying to stick to the rules and speak specifically to the bill here, but if the member wants me to, I could speak for at least 24 hours on the deregulation and the cuts this government has made — I have on occasion too — to environmental protection in this province. We have a whole lot of things happening right now that are either on the registry — some people know about it and some don't. They haven't stopped. Just because they have brought in this new bill today doesn't mean that they have stopped the deregulation and the cutting that's going on.

I mentioned the Taro landfill site and the Lands for Life. The interesting thing, for instance, in sulphur and gasoline, is that the minister came out and said he supported the federal government doing something on that. However, Sterling and two of his cabinet colleagues, the economic development minister and Energy Minister Jim Wilson, wrote to the federal environment minister denouncing the proposal just one week before. They said the new standards could mean the closure of two older refineries and not to do it.

Then there's the inert fill issue. I'll bet nobody here even knows about that issue, inert fill. I think we have to find a better header for it because it doesn't sound that interesting, but it too deals with waste management.

We're hoping we can stop this. What it would mean is that we would see toxic fill, toxic waste, possibly being dumped in Ontario parks. The recommended changes to the definition of "inert fill" will allow waste contaminated with more than 80 toxins to be dumped in areas designated as sensitive by the Ministry of the Environment.

The new regulation also has little in the way of regulatory controls, monitoring or enforcement. Therefore, that will clear the way for wholesale dumping on environmentally sensitive lands. This is on the books right now and people should be aware of it.

What could happen — a small example — is you could have some hazardous waste sitting on an industrial site in Toronto, and under this, if it goes ahead, that hazardous waste could be moved to an industrial site somewhere outside of Toronto just because it's labelled an industrial site. It may never before have had any hazardous material on it, but it suddenly could become a site for dumping of hazardous waste from the city of Toronto. There could be fill dumped in parks where before, under the existing law, that couldn't happen.

While the government comes forward today with this piece of legislation that we're all supporting, in the meantime they haven't stopped the deregulation and the cutting and the gutting of environmental protection in this province, and people should be aware of that.

I say to the government that bringing forward this bill is not enough. This is the one piece of legislation in all the years we've been here now where I have been able to stand up and say to the government. I support this piece of legislation. It is actually good for the environment. You are doing a good thing for a change. You are not doing something that's going to hurt our environment and perhaps be a hazard to our health, but you're actually doing something right for a change.

All we ask for now is that there be a commitment that the enforcement and monitoring staff be put back in the ministry, that some of the money the government is using for its propaganda to make people believe they're doing all kinds of wonderful things like creating jobs — in fact we find out there are even fewer jobs — that kind of propaganda, that kind of advertising getting ready for the next election, that they take some of that money and put it back into the Ministry of the Environment.

Then we could have some confidence that this bill we're debating today will actually make a difference. As it stands now, it's a nice piece of legislation that you really needed to be able to go into the election and say, "We've actually done something good." That's all you've got, but it's not good enough. You have to put the money back in or it won't be worth the piece of paper it's printed on.

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you check for a quorum again, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you check and see if there is a quorum present.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate. I urge members of the government, especially the backbenchers, who pretty soon are going to have to go door to door in this province, talking to people about what they've done during the time they've been responsible for the business of this province, to start listening to people like the member for Riverdale and appreciate that they are very vulnerable on the issue of the environment. They're going to have a lot of questions to answer for, particularly from those people who have a lot of knowledge in this area, who've spent virtually decades, dedicated their lives to this issue, and who are going to make a point of publicizing what you have done. The answers you have are going to be all but non-existent in terms of justifying what you've done.

If you think holding up Bill 82 is going to keep you out of the woods, think again. Like our environment critic, the member for Riverdale, I also intend to support this bill, but isn't it ironic that the one bill we feel comfortable supporting is all but word for word taken from one of our own NDP colleagues, the member for Algoma? What does that tell you in terms of this government's ability, Mike Harris's ability, to sit back and decide for themselves what ought to be done for the environment that's good? Virtually nothing else you've done, not a single thing you have done, has been supported by us in the NDP or by any environmentalist across the province who cares deeply about what you're doing.

It makes an awful lot of sense that, as we give credit for the fact that Bill 82 is here — albeit it originally was Bud Wildman's bill. That's fine. We're still prepared to see it here. We give you the credit for making sure it's there. Your motives are rather questionable, but it's here, it's going to pass and that is good.

Let's also scratch under the surface. Much of this talks about increased fines and methods for enforcement. But methods and fines of enforcement mean nothing if the people aren't there to actually do the enforcement. Look what you've done. You've cut the budget of the Ministry of the Environment by 45%. The number of staff you've cut — this is mind-boggling — from the Ministry of the Environment is almost 900. That's 900 fewer people working for 11 million people in terms of monitoring our environment and enforcing the laws that protect our environment.

At the end of the day, you cannot possibly be able to justify that somehow you've done more with less. That's absolutely impossible when you have a 45% cut in the budget and almost 900 fewer people. This involves inspectors, analysts, planners, people who do the monitoring. I can't believe there's one person left in the Ministry of the Environment who in their heart of hearts believes anything other than the fact that this government has totally backed away from environmental protection as any

kind of priority. In fact, I'll bet a lot of them are horrified and I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of them are looking elsewhere because they can't stomach the fact that they are now part of a ministry that seems intent on letting our environment be destroyed.

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It's been noted that you've changed and cut and gutted 13 laws; around 13 environmental protection pieces of legislation gutted. Over 80 regulations have either been eliminated or gutted. Think about it: about 13 separate pieces of legislation and over 80 pieces of regulation, all designed to protect our environment. Do you know what this government will do? They'll stand up and say: "We cut red tape. We did a wonderful thing. We cut red tape. We got rid of 80 regulations in the environment area alone." Somehow they want people to believe that that's good for our economy and good for our environment. It's not.

All they are doing is removing protections, as we would call them; barriers, as their colleagues and friends would see them, barriers to maximizing profit. Nothing wrong with profit, but not at the expense of raping our environment; that's not on. I don't believe that most people who are entrepreneurs and those people who are involved in big or small business are prepared to sacrifice our environment in the name of the almighty dollar.

Why? Because you can't escape from these kinds of changes. There's no hiding, not unless you're way, way up there: the gnomes of Zurich-type folks, where you've got yourself and your family secluded in some clean, pristine part of the world and you can make changes and make orders and make money from so far away that you're away from it — but for the vast majority of people, including the business leaders who make the economic decisions that this government is prepared to kow-tow to under any condition.

Look at the stats. The David Suzuki Foundation tells us that there are about 6,000 Ontarians who die prematurely as a result of poor air quality. At the same time, the Environmental Commissioner tells us that this government is behind in upgrading 120 air quality standards; 120 air quality standards should be upgraded, according to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, a position, by the way, created by an NPD government because of the importance we placed on the environment. She stated that 120 air quality standards need to be upgraded. You've done nothing about that. At the same time, the David Suzuki Foundation says, by their calculations, 6,000 Ontarians are dying prematurely because of poor air quality.

A recent study showed that about 300 of those citizens live in my community of Hamilton-Wentworth, and do you know what? It doesn't differentiate between Tories, Liberals, New Democrats and non-aligned. Just because you hold a Tory membership doesn't somehow make you immune from being one of the 6,000 across Ontario or one of the 300 in Hamilton-Wentworth. If you're a Tory and you get cancer because of poor air quality, you die just like everybody else dies. That's why I don't believe, at the

end of the day, most business people, captains of industry, entrepreneurs, will support what's happening to our environment, not if they understand the implications of what it means for their children or probably — certainly as important, maybe more important — grandchildren, great-grandchildren.

How much more of a wake-up call do we need that we can't continue to do what we're doing to the environment? We just can't do that. Then you get elected and decimate the laws and the regulations that were already in place, that were already deemed to be woefully inadequate, and somehow we're supposed to rejoice at this prospect. It's frightening. It's frightening that there's a political climate that allows these kinds of things to happen and that there aren't demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of people in the street every day. Every time we talk about a particular area of society that you've been given responsibility for, it boggles my mind that we live in a time and in a political climate that allows these kinds of things to happen with, quite frankly, relatively small protest.

The only exception to that is the labour movement that still have the ability to communicate and organize, and there they've put hundreds of thousands of people on the street in communities across the province. But everybody else who has been hurt by you, you've cut all their community action grants, you've eliminated the positions that were funded where there was community action so that you could stifle any kind of opposition.

While I'm talking about the labour movement, let me refer with great pride to United Steelworkers of America, local 1005, in Hamilton, who recently just in the last couple of months held a special day-long conference to talk about the environment. There are so many people, and you're very good at convincing people of this, far too many people, in my opinion, who buy into this myth that every bit of protection for our environment automatically means jobs, that we can't have a clean environment, we can't have clean air, clean water, clean land, and have jobs and have the economic growth that we need.

Local 1005, the leadership there — Warren Smith, John Bulloch — had the courage to hold a day-long conference with their elected representatives in that local and invite the media to talk about the importance of environmental protection to their union, to union members and their families, and why workers shouldn't be afraid of environmental protection. In fact, they make the case that it's quite the opposite, that workers and their families, particularly those who live in those cancer areas where there are high numbers of known carcinogens exposed in the air, why they ought to care about environmental protection.

I give the United Steelworkers of America and local 1005 a great deal of credit for having the courage to do that, because if there's anywhere where the myth of environmental protection means job loss, it's at a place like Stelco. They took that argument head on, because it is a myth, it's not a trade-off. If it's a trade-off of anything it's a trade-off of super-increased economic activity in the very short term for incredible costs to the economy and

costs to our health and costs to the lives of our family members down the road.

In Hamilton, if we could go back to the late 1800s and reconsider the initial decisions about what was allowed to be done with our harbour, I guarantee you there would be a whole different approach when we take a look at what our community has lost by seeing one of the most beautiful natural harbours in the world become over the course of the 20th century one of the most polluted bodies of water. Yes, we're beginning to clean it up now and, yes, there are varieties of fish that are returning and, yes, we're optimistic for the future, but at what cost? First, the quality of life to all Hamiltonians and, second, the hundreds of millions and, quite frankly, billions of dollars that it's going to cost us to clean it up, and it's the taxpayer who's footing the majority of the bill.

Why aren't we learning from history? We could have still been Steeltown, we still could have been the biggest provider of quality steel, at one point, in the world. We could have still done that and built in environmental protections for that body of water and for our community. But you could at least argue they didn't know nearly as much then. You could give them that. All history has to be put in the context of its time. What's the excuse now? Greed; taking care of your political friends; bumper-sticker sloganism at election time. That's what's being served now, not the future interests of our community, not for one second.

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While I'm talking about the 120 air quality standards that the Environmental Commissioner has said should be upgraded by this government, which you're not doing, at the same time you're doing the same thing to workers in the workplace. Occupational exposure limits, OELs, should have been upgraded also. You haven't done a thing. There was a joint committee of government, business and labour in place to look at the very question of exposure limits and their standards, and you killed it: the Occupational Disease Panel, an internationally renowned body, created to provide independent, arm's-length advice regarding scientific and medical evidence to determine whether exposure to substances in the workplace have a direct causal link to working people who get cancer and die of cancer. You killed it; you killed that panel. Yes, it cost money: \$1 million a year. You spent \$1 million changing the name of the WCB to the WSIB.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Good plan.

Mr Christopherson: The member for Durham East says, "Good plan." I'd like to see him defend that to the workers in Oshawa when we start talking about metal-working fluids and the fact that you haven't moved the limits there. The auto workers have been standing on that issue, climbing down your throat and that of your Minister of Labour for years, and you've done nothing about it. So let's see you, member for Durham East, who thinks it's so high and mighty to sit there and heckle about "Good plan," go talk to the auto workers in Oshawa who are being exposed to carcinogens in terms of metal-working fluids and don't have to be, but you won't do anything about it. Do you still think it's such a good plan?

You come out with your Drive Clean program — you've got to love this — all over TV, all over the radio, talking about Drive Clean. First of all, it's years behind in terms of when you promised you were going to bring it out. But more important, why did they pick this program? I'll tell you why. Because it doesn't go after any of their corporate pals.

It goes after legitimate pollution, no question, and it's something that should be done, no question. But in terms of all the things this government has done that have hurt the environment and all the things they haven't done that they should do, this becomes a priority. Why? So they can look tough, so they can run the ads, so they can say how wonderful they are about clamping down on environmental pollution, but the reality is that none of their pals are going to be hurt by it. They all drive very late-model cars. They all meet the regulations. But they can say, "We're being tough," and there's nothing here that's going to hurt the profits, the bottom line of their corporate pals, which is of course, in my view, the motivation behind gutting the environmental regulations in the first place. That's why they pick a program like this.

If you really cared about Drive Clean, you would have kept the shared responsibility you had for public transit and you would have made sure there was money there today and in the future to expand public transit. That provides jobs also. It also helps keep our environment and make our environment cleaner. Instead, you downloaded it on to municipalities, who can't afford it as a result of the other downloading you've put on them.

I cannot leave this issue without talking about what's happened with Plastimet. Plastimet was a disaster of international proportion. It was reported worldwide daily. CNN ran it as a headline item. At the end of the day, you refused to give Hamiltonians the public inquiry we're entitled to. How shameful, how disgraceful that you show no interest in finding out what happened, why it happened and how we prevent it from happening again, yes, in Hamilton but in every community across Ontario. Disgraceful.

The Taro landfill: How far does that issue have to go? The member for Wentworth North, to his credit, has been the leading voice on this but not your government. You wouldn't listen to him before. Now, some of us have called for you to bring in the OPP in addition to the review that's being done in the ministry; also, to call a public inquiry into that fiasco, because there are a whole lot of questions that need to be answered. What do we get from your minister? Silence in terms of anything effective.

That's the point. At the end of the day, yes, this bill does good things, it was an NDP bill, but you still aren't changing the fact that you're hurting our environment.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): The opposition takes a holier-than-thou position, that they're the only ones who care about the environment and Conservatives don't care about the environment.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Look at their record, crime commissioner.

Mr Skarica: All right, look at the record. Let's look at it in my area. We had two dump issues in Hamilton-Wentworth. One of them was in my riding. A dump was proposed to be put in in Greensville.

The issue first came up when the Liberals were in power. At that time it was going to be one of the world's largest dumps. The member at that time, who was the Minister of Education, wouldn't take a position on it. He was in cabinet and he felt he couldn't take a position on pretty well the most important environmental issue in our area. The voters rewarded him for that position by not voting for him and he lost the election to an NDP member.

During the NDP regime, we had 140 days of hearings on this dump. To put that in perspective, that's almost as long as the O.J. Simpson trial. At the end of that trial —

Mr Pouliot: But he got off.

Mr Skarica: The NDP didn't get off on this issue, because after 140 days of hearings the environmental board said: "There's no way that this dump should go in. It's too dangerous." So the cabinet decided that dump shouldn't go in and cabinet disapproved the dump. Was it an NDP cabinet? No, it wasn't. It was the Conservative cabinet. Mr Tsubouchi, who is here, was on that cabinet. It was a Conservative cabinet that made that decision. For the members of the House here to say that the Conservatives don't care about the environment is just not true. It's fair to say that we all care about the environment, Conservatives, Liberals maybe and the NDP alike. That's the fair position I suggest.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm proud to be able to say a few comments about the member for Hamilton Centre's talk to the House. The problem with this place is that sometimes we don't listen to what's said. What we'd rather do is pick one or two points and dwell on them. Had we listened to what the member was saying, we would clearly understand, as I'm sure the people of Ontario clearly understood, that there's great room for improvement. The reality is that over the course of the last three years there have been mistakes made by the government with regard to environmental protection. If only we would learn from our mistakes and improve the future because of the mistakes we made in the past, Ontario would be a much better place.

The member for Hamilton Centre mentioned air quality standards. All you have to do is live in a place like Sarnia, Sault Ste Marie, Hamilton or Sudbury to realize the importance of air quality standards on the quality of life that the people in those cities live with and want to live in. The reality is, unless you have those proper standards, our quality of life suffers. This government, because of its inaction or because of its cuts, seriously and severely limited the quality of life of the people who live in industrial cities in this province.

I don't believe, as the member doesn't believe, that this legislation is going to solve the problems. He spoke briefly about workplace carcinoma, disease panels etc. Hopefully I will get a chance later on to spend some time on it, but it would do well for the government to listen carefully to what the member for Hamilton Centre has told us.

1650

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I want to congratulate the member for Riverdale, who led off the debate here this afternoon, as well as the member for Hamilton Centre in pointing out that this was a bill introduced by the member for Algoma, Bud Wildman, back in 1995. At that time, had the government proceeded with that bill to third reading, it would have been a lot better than we are today with the almost identical bill they've brought in. They waited to the point where they were able to cut \$150 million out of the Ministry of the Environment budget and lay off over 750 people. The prosecutions have gone down by more than 50%. The bill is only as good as the people you have there to enforce it and make sure we don't have garbage from large cities like Toronto being dumped on northern Ontario.

I travelled through both the ridings of Timiskaming-Cochrane and Timmins-James Bay last week. There was a concern back in 1990 that the government that was thrown out of office at that time had decided they were going to allow garbage from Toronto to go to Kapuskasing to be incinerated or dumped in the north. Now we're seeing that the Conservative government doesn't seem to think there's anything wrong with allowing garbage to be put down every abandoned mine in northern Ontario.

So at the same time as we're talking about a bill of this kind, this government is not prepared to hire back the people and put the money back into the Ministry of the Environment budget that is needed to enforce the existing laws, let alone the bill we're talking about here today. If you don't have the dollars there and the people to enforce and inspect what is happening for the 11 million people in the province of Ontario, we're all in trouble.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): The members for Hamilton Centre and Riverdale have indicated that their New Democratic caucus is going to support the bill, and they spent all the rest of their time lecturing the government. I must say, as a member who sat while those two members were in cabinet and watched what their environmental policies were during the time they were in office, I found that they had an unbelievable amount of gall. They created the mother of all environmental follies, the superdump. Remember that? They created something called the Interim Waste Authority and they were going to put a superdump in my riding, right outside of Bolton.

Mr Len Wood: So?

Mr Tilson: The member says, "So?" Great. What an attitude. That is the hypocrisy of what the member just said, these two members standing up and talking about how they care for the environment. They were going to put a superdump in my riding. They had absolutely no policies whatsoever. They would not allow municipalities to look at other alternatives. They were completely averse to municipalities looking at energy-from-waste facilities. They were completely averse to municipalities looking at any other alternatives with respect to waste management. Their answer was a superdump.

They also of course were going to put a lift on to Britannia, as they did, without an environmental assess-

ment. It was going to go up into the sky without an environmental assessment. Who knows what effect that is going to have on that environment at Britannia.

It's fine for the members to sit there and lecture our government as to our environmental policies, but the track record of the New Democratic party, their government, their caucus, is an absolute disgrace.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Rosario Marchese): Response, member for Riverdale.

Ms Churley: I'd like to thank all the members who responded and thank the member for Hamilton Centre as well for speaking to this.

To the member for Dufferin-Peel: Everybody is laughing at you. Everybody is laughing at members of your government when you stand up and try to pretend that you actually care about the environment and that you're "doing more with less." I'd just give up that line. It's not going to get you anywhere. It's not just us saying these things about your government; it's everybody else out there.

I listed a number of reports put out by independent bodies over the last three years. Once again, you're not listening to them. Mister Know-It-All, over there, you just won't listen, and everybody is just laughing at you. Let me say again that that's not going to get you anywhere.

On the waste management issue: It was a festering problem, building up for years, which previous governments ignored. Now what does this government do? It continues to ignore it, except that it tries to get all our garbage hauled up north to dump it up there where nobody wants it, and dump it into the United States. Out of sight, out of mind. That's what you're trying to do. You're not dealing with the problem at all. It's a very major problem, a very difficult problem that all governments have had to deal with.

To the member for Wentworth North I say that the Tories would not have cancelled the dump in the Hamilton area if it weren't for the very process that we put in place. In fact, part of the problem with this government do? That you don't have processes left any more. You have don't have intervenor funding. People no longer have a say. There's more and more self-regulation. Now you're just dumping willy-nilly and nobody has a chance to even have a say.

The member for Sudbury I think was saying that there's such a thing as an environmental deficit, and our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren are going to have to pay for that deficit through their pocket-books and, even worse, through their health.

The member for Cochrane North makes a good point about why the government took so long to bring in this NDP bill.

Mr Galt: I'm certainly pleased to be able to respond to comments on this bill, Bill 82. It was interesting to hear the perfection of the NDP, what great things they did for the environment. If it was so perfect, I don't know why we would have to do anything. We could just ride along. But we've had to make an awful lot of changes to straighten out the mess they were making.

It's indeed a pleasure to be able to share with the Legislature the improved compliance and enforcement that we're going to have with this coming bill. Ontario has long enjoyed a very high standard of environmental protection, though over the years it has become apparent that there are certain limits on the Ministry of the Environment's effectiveness when it comes to ensuring compliance and enforcing the province's environmental laws.

I want to focus my talk today on some of those limits and how Bill 82 will help the ministry ensure compliance and enforce the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act. These are the three pieces of legislation administered by the ministry. They are strong, but reforms are still needed to ensure that they are able to meet their intended goal of protecting the environment and health in Ontario.

As my colleagues are aware, I had the honour of leading the Ministry of the Environment's comprehensive reform on the rules and regulations that it administers. These reforms are intended to ensure that our environmental protection system is doing the best job possible. The regulatory structure that we set out to reform is more than a quarter-century old.

Mr Len Wood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you check to see if we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, please check for quorum.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The member for Northumberland.

1700

Mr Galt: A number of problems have certainly arisen since.

The situation is similar with respect to the available tools for compliance and enforcement. Changes have been made to update the system but it's been done in a haphazard fashion, and the system remains in need of modernization to make compliance and enforcement tools more workable and therefore more effective.

Right now, we have a system that is inconsistent, with powers and penalties varying under the three pieces of legislation that we administer. There is considerable confusion out there for both the ministry staff who must do their work within the context of our rules and regulations, and the regulated community which must meet our requirements.

Unfortunately, Ontario has lagged behind other Canadian jurisdictions, as well as some of the US jurisdictions, in having available the most modern and up-to-date compliance tools. One example of such a tool is administrative monetary penalties. I'll have more to say about this in just a few minutes.

A result of our problems in the compliance and enforcement area is that we have reached a point where repeat environmental offenders have found ways to play the system. They have been able to continue their polluting

ways, secure in the knowledge that it is difficult for the ministry to lay a hand on them. These offenders have realized that the ministry often cannot stop their activities and that the fines the courts have the authority to impose are not prohibitive in all cases. They know that it will be difficult to collect them and that there are various games they can play to avoid paying. I am sure you've heard the figure. Since 1985, there are some \$10 million in unpaid fines. Polluters also know that the list of jailable offences is narrow and that prison time isn't a reasonable possibility in the majority of cases. I know that the ministry staff find it incredibly frustrating to deal with some of these repeat environmental offenders. Worst of all is the arrogance displayed by these bad players. All too often, they are able to engage us in cat-and-mouse games, knowing that we're restricted in our ability to deal with them.

The main victim of these bad players is the environment. Environmental law offences damage our air, water and land. This in turn affects the health of Ontarians. The unfortunate thing is that the young and the elderly are the most susceptible to an unhealthy environment.

The good corporate players are also victims. They choose to obey the law for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it's morally right to do so. They want to see a clean environment. They do not want to get ahead by sacrificing our air, water and land and our health. Good corporate players believe that if the rules are fair and equally applied to all, then you should be able to comply with those rules and be able to do well for yourself. The Ontario government shares this belief and we're firmly committed to ensuring that these views prevail.

As the situation now stands, it is difficult to ensure that the rules are applied fairly. Yes, the laws are the same for everyone; but no, certain individuals and companies have not been subject to the same degree. They've found ways to beat the system.

My colleague Bill Saunderson had a lot to say about this issue during the last round of debate on this bill, so I won't have too much to add to that. Suffice it to say that reforms are needed to bring our province in line with other provinces and to make our laws better able to perform their intended purpose: deterring and punishing polluters and protecting our environment.

This need has been recognized by other parties. I particularly want to commend Bud Wildman, a former Minister of the Environment, for his efforts to introduce a private member's bill that is similar in intent to Bill 82. I believe that we've made the act more comprehensive than the private member's bill and that the act would make Ontario's compliance and enforcement powers among the toughest in North America.

In every area addressed by this act, our intention is to increase the ability of ministry staff to deter and punish those who choose short-term and short-sighted gain over their environmental responsibility. Let's not forget that the right to make a good living carries with it important responsibilities to the community of Ontarians, not the least of which is carrying on business in an environ-

mentally responsible way. The goal of the act is to create a fair situation for those operators who respect the law, and to make life much more difficult for those who do not respect environmental laws, because when they do not respect the law, offenders are showing callous disrespect for the environment and for their fellow Ontarians. With this bill, we are trying to create a level playing field where the rules will apply fairly and equally to all.

I'd now like to give you an overview of the contents of the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act.

One of the act's key features is more authority for the courts to impose jail sentences. By this I mean that we are proposing a longer list of offences punishable with jail time. We know that there have been many cases in the past where polluters have resisted attempts to stop their offences, because they knew there was no way they were going to go to jail. They knew that the judges' hands were tied because they can only impose sentences within their authority, and that authority has been limited when it comes to jail time for environmental offences.

This is also frustrating for ministry staff who would like to see their efforts make a difference for the environment. They want to know that their work is having its proper punitive and deterrent effects.

Mr Bartolucci: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: There are some excellent statistics being mentioned in the House, and I'm wondering, is there a quorum present to learn from these statistics?

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there's a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: The longer list of jailable offences should make potential offenders give second thought to any idea of breaking the environmental law. In the case of environmental offences, we're generally not talking about impulsive actions or tough criminals. Those ultimately responsible for environmental offences tend to be more calculating and cunning types who would find the prospect of jail particularly unpalatable, so the realistic possibility of prison time would be an effective deterrent to the breaking of Ontario's environmental laws.

Higher fines will also have a strong deterrent effect if this bill is passed. Fines are not just a cost of doing business, and they shouldn't be seen as such. They must be high enough to perform their intended function, deterrence as well as punishment.

A few moments ago I mentioned \$10 million in unpaid fines. Changes proposed under Bill 82 would give courts greater authority to collect fines. For example, a vehicle engaged in the commission of an environmental offence could be seized. Following conviction, the polluter would have to pay all penalties before getting the vehicle back. If the fine is still not paid, the court could require forfeiture. The vehicle would then be sold off and the proceeds would go to the government.

Another new feature of the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act would be the authority for courts to make restitution orders. Current legislation contains no such provision. If someone dumps tires on the property of another person, that other person can be stuck with the costs of cleanup. If the offender is eventually convicted, the innocent property owner has to sue to recover his costs. We propose court authority for restitution orders, whereby convicted polluters can be ordered to repay cleanup costs to such innocent parties.

1710

A longer list of jailable offences, increased fines, more authority to collect fines and restitution orders all involve the ability of courts to deliver environmental justice based on the tools available to them. Bill 82 proposes a series of new tools for ministry staff to be more effective in dealing with pollution offences and getting them to court, where appropriate. One example is the authority to seize licence plates and permits from vehicles used to commit environmental offences. Ministry staff now have the authority, but the conditions for its use have been so restrictive that they haven't been able to make proper use of it.

Our proposals would enable the ministry to make proper use of this authority. It will be a very useful tool because ministry staff will be able, in certain circumstances, to prevent the continuance of certain actions against the environment.

The Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act would also streamline the process by which environmental officers issue compliance orders in the field. Our field staff will have more ability to take on-the-spot action to stop polluting activities. This is a great improvement over strict reliance on prosecution. By streamlining the field order process, we'll be able to stop activities that previously wouldn't have made it to the prosecution stage.

We'll be able to achieve the same goal with another of the act's key provisions: the ability of ministry directors to hand out administrative monetary penalties for minor offences. The power is already widely used in other Canadian jurisdictions. The maximum administrative monetary penalty would be \$5,000 for every day an offence occurs.

I want to stress that these penalties are not fines. They will cover minor offences that normally wouldn't go to prosecution. I also want to stress that administrative monetary penalties are not a replacement for prosecution. They are a much-needed tool to help us strengthen compliance with Ontario's environmental laws. Ensuring compliance is, after all, the main way we protect Ontario's environment.

One way these penalties will help us protect the environment is by resolving many minor offences that normally wouldn't be resolved. We have other mechanisms for dealing with major offences, but it will help the environment and help level the playing field for the honest operators. If we can get companies to remedy situations that may have continued in the past, the use of administrative monetary penalties is often a more efficient way than through prosecution, which is costly and time con-

suming. We would also be able to deal with more non-compliance situations than we can at present.

The Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act will enable ministry officers to secure areas and facilities to ensure evidence is protected. The lack of ability to do so in the past has been a hindrance to our effectiveness.

Ministry staff will have more modern investigative aids and techniques at their disposal if the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act is passed. One of the most labour-intensive parts of investigation is surveillance. It can take as many as five vehicles to do a proper job of keeping track of one illegal operation. These new, more effective and efficient and less labour-intensive techniques would enable the same staff to cover more situations where environmental wrongdoing is suspected.

Under the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act we're proposing the use of high-tech surveillance methods. For example, with a court order we'll be able to put a tracking device on vehicles that we suspect are engaged in offences against the environment. These devices can be tracked in a number of ways. Ministry officers could follow from behind in other vehicle or even follow from the air.

Another surveillance method is the use of substances that can be added to a load of waste to, in effect, give it a fingerprint. We would then be able to determine whether the load at the destination is in fact the same as the load at the starting point. Ministry officers would be freed from having to be physically present during all stages of surveillance. They would be able to track more situations simultaneously. More minor offences would be stopped or prevented.

I know the opposition has had a lot of criticism about the number of investigators. We still have the same number of senior investigators that we had during the NDP government. Yes, some of the other minor or lesser environmental officers have been laid off, but the senior environmental investigators are still there. It's unfortunate that the only thing the opposition can come up with is to spend more money: spend it on more people, get more people more of this, more of that. This method we're using here will accomplish the same thing with less people. For example, with tracers, rather than having five out there chasing, one person can simultaneously follow several loads.

Another change under this bill will be the ability to go after not just those actually involved in the commission of waste offences but also those who are behind the scenes, such as the brokers who make arrangements for illegal dumping and tell transporters of waste where to go. They are just as responsible, if not more responsible, as the people physically committing the crimes and must be brought under the umbrella of justice.

The provision in the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act for orders to remove waste is also applicable to these people who generate and broker illegal waste. Again, the current legislation hasn't been applicable to those on the so-called periphery of waste offences.

The threat of jail time will apply to these brokers and waste offence masterminds.

The last point I want to make about the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act is that it gives ministry officers authority to hand out summonses to the drivers of vehicles on behalf of the illegal waste hauling companies they are employed by. We have been limited in the past in our ability to get at the owners of out-of-province and out-of-country operations because we could only serve summonses to the person operating the vehicle. Again, this will serve as a deterrent to those outside Ontario who would see our province as a good place to do bad business.

I have outlined a number of the proposals contained in the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act. They have one common goal: to be fair to those who comply with Ontario's environmental laws and tough on those who break them. Cleaner air, water and land is a goal for everyone in this House. That's why I believe this bill we are debating today is an excellent piece of legislation and worthy of the support of all three parties. I'm particularly pleased that a member of the opposition brought it forward. Bud Wildman had introduced it as a private member, as it related to waste, but we've extended it to cover the full Environmental Protection Act as well as the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act.

There were several comments made about regulations and the changes of the regulations by our ministry. I can assure you there are no regulations that have been changed to weaken the environment. The regulations were changed with a view towards being clearer, stronger and better. I know that the critic from the NDP was present when the white paper came out, and she came over and actually congratulated us on an excellent job. I was disappointed to hear that critic make comments today about how terrible these regulations were, but I also appreciated the fact that she did compliment us on bringing in this bill. I hope that a few months or a year down the road she will still be supportive of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Caplan: It's always a pleasure to follow the member for Northumberland in his comments. It's really strange that this particular piece of legislation raises the fines and imposes jail terms for polluters. That's certainly a good idea, but if you look at what has happened in the last three or three and a half years under this government, the number of fines has dropped almost 60%. There is nobody in the Ministry of the Environment to enforce any of the environmental standards that have been built in this province for decades. So I really take the words of the Minister of the Environment as being hollow, because who is going to carry out all of the functions that are supposed to happen under Bill 82?

1720

I would quote to you, Speaker, as I would to all members of this House, the words of our Provincial Auditor. Back in 1992, the auditor said that there had to be an updating of air quality standards in Ontario. Well, six years later, in 1998, the Provincial Auditor points out

that not one air quality standard had been updated — not one — in six years. We've had a minister not of environment but of inertia. We've had a government more interested in advertising and selling than in actually having firm, high-quality environmental standards. The real tragedy that's going on here is more rhetoric, more of a sales job.

This government is not committed to environmental standards. In fact, we put in, as an amendment to Bill 55, that environmental standards would be protected. The government members voted against those kinds of amendments, which shows the real commitment of this government when it comes to the environment. It's a sad day.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: I know the member for Northumberland hates it when the opposition criticizes them, but what you have done, quite appropriately, is to praise the member for Algoma, and our friend from Lake Nipigon too, who was very much connected to all of this as a former minister. We have praised them, and indirectly we praise this government for having taken on some of those ideas that we think are very effective. We've done that. Then we whack them when they deserve to be whacked, and that's what we're doing.

What we're saying is, yes, in terms of prosecution, you've got the right language, we've agreed with that, but what the member for Riverdale points out is that at the level of compliance, you're failing. Are you saying we shouldn't criticize you because you don't have the right compliance methodology or procedures in place to deal with it? Are you saying that's bad? Surely you would want a good measure of compliance to be there. What we're saying in terms of compliance is that you don't have the staff to do it. You have laid off 750 human beings who dealt with issues of compliance. You're saying, "That's OK. 'Just spend, spend, spend' is what critics are saying." No. We're saying that if you want compliance for these good measures, you need the people. Put back the people to deal with compliance. You chopped \$150 million from that department. It's a bad thing. It means you won't have the staff to deal with matters of compliance, enforcement, monitoring and inspection.

You have contributed to the degradation of our environment and you have, through this dumping of waste in our waters and air, caused our physiology to be deranged and caused countless deaths in our province. We urge you to put the money into compliance, into monitoring, in order for this bill to be effective.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I listened intently to the remarks from the member for Northumberland, as I always do when he speaks. He speaks so eloquently each time he addresses this House, which he doesn't do nearly often enough. He's become so adept at extemporaneous speaking and thinking on his feet that he's actually got it down to a fine science. His remarks this afternoon in particular sounded almost as though they were read straight from a script, so effective is he at thinking on his feet and speaking extemporaneously in this chamber. I

admire his talent in that respect. I listened with great interest to his words, which were eloquent, as usual, and I was very encouraged by the message he brought to us and the great step forward that is represented by the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act, the bill that is before us this afternoon.

I was particularly encouraged to hear that the bill has the support of the critic from the New Democratic Party. I was somewhat disappointed to learn that that support has been attenuated somewhat and she's backed off to some degree. I don't know why, but it is encouraging to know that the bill has received support from the critic from the third party here in this House. Certainly it deserves to, inasmuch as it does represent a substantial advancement for the cause of environmental protection in this province.

I commend the member for Northumberland for his remarks this afternoon, bringing that message to us all.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bradley: Madam Speaker, as the environment critic for one of the parties, you would know that you can have all the legislation you want put into effect, but if you do not have the staff and the resources to enforce the provisions of that legislation, then it is virtually useless.

What has happened with the Ministry of the Environment since this government came into power is that it has decided it's not a priority. In fact, the budget was slashed drastically, the staff numbers have been slashed drastically. I don't know if you can say it of all ministries, you probably can make an argument in many ministries for this, but if you do not have the resources and you do not have the staff to carry out the responsibilities of the ministry, no matter what legislation you're going to pass, it's going to be somewhat ineffective.

The Premier and the Solicitor General said it was important to have 1,000 police in the province. They would recognize, as I think all people do, that if you have a significant number of police in the province to carry out the provisions of the laws that we pass in this Legislature, that's going to be important. Yet in this ministry they have cut way back, and it's largely because they've received complaints from the kind of people who support them, people who never liked the Ministry of the Environment, people who never liked environmental regulations or legislation. But I think what they'll find is that the good corporate citizens really want a strong Ministry of the Environment and strong legislation.

This bill will receive the approval of members of this House. I'm certain of that. It's the first bill they've had that's really been a progressive bill. Every other bill we've seen, every other regulatory change we've seen by this government has been designed to weaken the environmental effort of the province of Ontario. That's why, as I say, the faint hope comes with this particular bill, but it will not have the people nor the resources to enforce it and bring it into effect.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thanks to the member for York East for his very kind comments. His cheque is in the mail.

The member for Oriole made all kinds of references: fines dropped by 60%. I suppose if the number of charges

in the RIDE program are down, that means they're not out checking as much. Or does it mean there's less drinking and driving? I think you have to analyze what's going on. The fact that there's \$10 million still outstanding in fines from 1985 to 1995 is indicative that there were just no teeth. Maybe you ran out and made the charges, but a lot of good it did. They just thumbed their nose at the government and said, "Go."

When it comes to air standards, they are some 30 years old. Both the two previous governments could have done something about air standards. We're looking at some 70 of them. There are a large number on the Environmental Bill of Rights right now and there's another bunch to go on. Some of them take an awful lot of scientific research to analyze what is a safe level. So I can tell you that the air standards are certainly being well addressed.

I think some of the comments made by all of the opposition are interesting. Again, they're back to talking about spend, spend, spend. I'm glad that's on the record for the upcoming election because I'm sure a lot of people in Ontario will remember the kind of spend, borrow and tax that went on from 1985 to 1995. They'll be pleased to know that's the way people like the member for St Catharines and the member for Fort York want to govern in the future: just spend, tax and borrow.

There were comments made on the regulatory changes. We came out saying they were clearer, better, stronger. I don't think there's any question. I challenge anyone in the opposition to show me one of those regulations that really has been weakened. You have all kinds of rhetoric. I'm still waiting for you to come up with the regulation that has indeed been weakened.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'm pleased to stand in my place today and speak. I hope I can continue to speak for the 20 minutes I'm allotted.

Actually, Madam Speaker, you helped inspire my reason to speak today as you mentioned an issue that's near and dear to most of the constituents I represent in the riding of Timiskaming, and that's in regard to the Adams mine waste proposal. It gives me an opportunity to counter a very generous critical package that was sent to all members and copied to the world a few weeks ago about my stand on the issue.

I'll start at the beginning and talk a little bit about the history of the project.

1730

We had a very active iron ore mine — we had two of them, actually — in the riding of Timiskaming. The Adams mine just south of Kirkland Lake shipped iron ore pellets for 20 years to Dofasco in Hamilton. It was decided by the operating company to close it, unfortunately. Between the two mines, it put 750 people out of work in my riding in the late 1980s.

When that happened, a proponent from North Bay made the proposal that the site be used for the delivery basically of all of Toronto's garbage — I mean all the garbage before it's recycled — and that there be a recycling plant on the site. From that there would be spinoff industries on the site to create a lot of industrial

jobs in the area. I'm sure all members, when confronted with such a project, have to be open to such a project. Certainly I was through most of the process.

The idea up was that the project be run by the city of Toronto. It was in December 1995 that the city of Toronto finally rejected the idea because of the high capital costs to invest in the construction of this plant. So the project at that time basically was dropped by the city. Shortly thereafter, the proponent, Notre Development of North Bay, decided to bring this forward as a private sector proposal, and proceeded that way. Now the project was to be run by the private company and also was not to have the recycling component. Basically it was just to be a dump. That's when a lot of people in the riding really started to get concerned, started to learn more about the project and started to get a feel for what the potential environmental impact might be.

What we're talking about in this abandoned iron ore mine is a fractured-rock pit — fractured rock not only because of the geological pressures over time that happen in a pit such as that, but also because of all the blasting that had occurred over the 20-year history of the mine to extricate the iron ore from that site. What we have here is a very technically complicated proposal that is going to have to work absolutely perfectly if it is to be environmentally sustainable. This pit is 200 metres deep. This pit sits about 20 miles north of the beginning of the great clay agricultural belt in Timiskaming, where all the towns south of this site, and all the farmers, derive their fresh water needs, both for household use and for farm use, for their livestock. There was a great concern in the farming community with this.

The core of this proposal is a hydraulic containment system, which means that all the water runs from the water table into the pit and therefore it would be possible, according to the proponent, to devise a mechanical system that would collect the leachate, which is the poisonous toxins that are created when water runs through household garbage, especially when you're talking about 20 million tonnes of household garbage in one place. Through a very elaborate system of pipes and pumps, this leachate would be captured and pumped up to a water filtration plant on the surface, where most of the toxins would be taken out, except for the heavy metals. What remained would go into a tailings pond, later to be discharged into the Blanche River system and into Lake Timiskaming.

The problem a lot of people have, myself included, with this particular project is the scale of this project and its dependence upon a mechanical system to keep it environmentally sustainable. We're talking about a million tonnes of garbage over 20 years coming from somewhere in southern Ontario — a contract yet to be agreed upon — to be deposited in this pit.

Even the proponent proposes and admits that this site would have to be actively pumped for 125 years in order to render the leachate safe, and then after that a passive system would have to be employed for another 800 to 900 years. People who are going to come after those of us who live currently in the riding of Timiskaming will have to take care of basically this 20-year project. For 1,000 years

we will have to take care, we will have to babysit, basically, 20 years' worth of southern Ontario garbage for up to, along the whole system, about 85 jobs.

This issue is hotly debated at home. I have been criticized as of late for continuing, in this case, to try to find out what my constituents believe about the project, using the normal methods that MPPs avail themselves of: mail-in survey cards to households. But it really boils down to two things: Is this project and the potential environmental risk this project could bring to the area worth the number of jobs for 20 years? It's my opinion, and I believe now I can speak for the vast majority of my constituents, having done a survey which I'll speak about in a little while, that no, it is not worth this.

The other aspect to this is community acceptance. While we're talking about Bill 82, another environmental act here, it was this government that two years ago basically scoped down or shortened the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act that would apply to projects such as this, and that's what this project got caught up in. That brings me to the full socio-economic aspect of this, because while in the early 1990s I was calling for a full environmental assessment, that meant that besides looking at environmental sustainability, the community had to agree upon the acceptance of this and that this project would do no harm to the economy or the culture of our area.

As we saw from a National Post article about three weeks ago now, in the Monday edition three weeks ago, the headline of that was "Canada's Garbage Capital," and it was Kirkland Lake. That is sort of the perspective people now are starting to have about Kirkland Lake. People at home understand that and know that, and I think they intuitively feel that, and that's upsetting. It's counter to the pride that people in northern Ontario have about what we do well. In particular, in Kirkland Lake what we do well and what we have offered the world is that we have contributed more NHL players than any town in Canada over the years. I and people in Timiskaming district and especially in the town of Kirkland Lake are very proud of that.

We're also very proud of our gold-mining heritage, and while this doesn't give us the affluence of an Oakville or a Mississauga, it does give us some boom times, and some bust times. Unfortunately, in the last 10 years we've been in some bust times, and that's why a project like this can be dangled in front of us as a lifeline to our boom-and-bust economy and in some circles does look to be attractive. When you've got money invested in your business, of course you want your business to do well, and a project that promises jobs, as this does, then begins to look attractive.

But we have to also understand who we are and what we're about. While we don't have the steady employment that we'd like to have, I think we have an opportunity in that new economy to find that, that we will have a greater opportunity to diversify as the information age develops and more and more of our young people see that there are other opportunities besides working in the resource industry, which is still the backbone of our economy in

northern Ontario. So I think it's important that the people as individuals in our area have a say.

1740

What the proponent has said and been able to accomplish is that three municipal councils over the last couple of terms, within a catchment area of where the majority of the workers who used to work at the Adams mine lived, have agreed that this would be a good project, but on an issue as all-encompassing and having such a potential effect on our area as this, I believe it's important that all the people in the area have a say.

The proponent's lawyer during the EA hearings asked me whether I would accept the verdict of the EA panel and made a big fuss about that when I decided to go ahead and survey all the households in my riding. What I said, if you looked at the transcript of the hearing, is that I would respect the decision of the Environmental Assessment Board, and I respect that process and that the people did their work, but I don't necessarily accept the conclusion that they made.

In fact, that conclusion was inconclusive, in that the board gave a conditional approval based on more testing, and only two commissioners of the three on the board gave it the conditional approval based on further testing. A third commissioner said he did not believe that the project was environmentally sustainable. That testing process is going on now. It involves boreholes underneath this pit to determine whether this pit can hold the leachate that will develop from this project, and that has yet to be decided. The project has yet to receive its certificate of approval from the Ministry of the Environment.

I've always said that there are really two issues here: There is environmental sustainability, but there is also community acceptance. So I went on a few weeks ago to put out a survey in the riding to try to find out once and for all what the views of my constituents were on the project. I started doing that on October 23, and hired an independent direct mail house in Mississauga to have delivered over 16,000 postage-paid reply questionnaires in the riding of Timiskaming so that every household would receive that, asking their opinion about this project.

Also, to ensure the independence of this survey — because of my biased view that I'm actually against this project — I hired a chartered accounting firm in New Liskeard to receive the cards, so that my office would not be tabulating these cards; it would be done by a chartered accountant. I think this upset the proponent, number one, that not only was I going directly to the people over the heads of the municipal councils that had approved of this project to ask them view as families and households, but also ensuring the independence of this by hiring the accounting firm.

The accounting firm that I hired received a letter from the lawyer representing Notre Development basically threatening a lawsuit if they were to continue being engaged in the process of tabulating the survey cards that I had sent out. After talking to the local representative of the chartered accounting firm, we mutually decided that it

would probably be easier for both of us for me to find a third, independent party.

I decided to do that, though I must say, the accounting firm's risk management people, as they started to look at this, felt there probably was no case to be made by the proponent that this accounting could not be done by the accounting firm. But it was going to be a complication and a difficulty, so we mutually agreed to cancel the contract and I asked a local United Church minister, the Rev Bob Williams, to supervise the counting of the ballots on the week of November 17.

On November 19, the Thursday morning, we were able to announce the results of the garbage project survey, and 83% of respondents indicated they did not support the shipping of Toronto garbage to the abandoned iron ore site south of Kirkland Lake. The response from this was 32%, which anyone will tell you in any direct mail operation is a very high return rate.

As I've mentioned, the controversy in this was that the proponent certainly didn't like me going over his head and going over the heads of the three municipalities that have endorsed this. By the way, part of the financial arrangement in the town of Kirkland Lake between the proponent and the council and the mayor is that a gag order has been placed on the elected municipal officials. No elected municipal official in Kirkland Lake can speak out against this project. There's a gag order there. I think it is unbelievable in a free society that we live in in Ontario that there's a gag order. There are not too many people of public stature who are able to speak out against this project in my area, and I continue to do so.

A lot of controversy by the proponent was also in regard to the methodology of this survey. I have said from the very beginning this was not a perfect methodology at all. Sending out cards to every household allows for human error, and I know not every household got one. It doesn't allow every person of voting age to have a say, but it's the best I was able to do when the municipalities involved turned down repeated requests to have plebiscites or referendums on this subject. As the member representing the area as a whole, it was the best I could do.

I wish I could do better. I wish I could provide a more accurate method for my constituents to speak their minds on this project. I can't think of one that I can possibly do. The best and only method that I think we all would accept here in a House that is peopled by the ballot box would be a plebiscite or a referendum, so I would ask the towns to do that.

I think the result of this survey certainly gives us a hint that there is quite a bit of opposition to the project in the area. If, as the Premier said in a letter to some of my constituents in the 1990 election at the time when he was leader of the opposition party, there should be community acceptance, then I think the only way to truly find that out would be through a referendum, so I would ask the towns to do that.

The findings of my survey are very consistent with other surveys that were done in the area. In 1995 I did a survey restricting it only to the catchment area of the

proponent, and at that time it came back at 73% against. Maybe in my two-minute response wrap-up after the others speak, I will talk about some of the other survey results that have happened.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Len Wood: In the two-minute response to the member for Timiskaming, I'm fully aware of the controversy that he sees himself embroiled in in the Timiskaming area because of the position that the Liberal government took prior to 1990 and then the position that the opposition Liberals took from 1990 to 1995, as a result switching positions in 1995 during the election campaign and supporting the position the NDP government had taken, now the member sees himself in controversy.

1750

The other speakers said this bill is probably a good bill with the exception of the fact that the government has cut 750 jobs out of the Ministry of the Environment and reduced the budget by \$150 million. If the government had adopted this bill that the member for Algoma, Bud Wildman, brought in in 1995, before they slashed the budget and laid off that many people, we might have had a bill here that could be enforced and we'd see good environmental laws in Ontario.

Ever since I've been involved in election campaigns, I personally have taken the position that no city, no matter how large, has the right to dump its garbage in other areas. During the election of 1990, the Liberal government had decided they were going to approve garbage from Toronto going to Kapuskasing to be incinerated, and whatever they couldn't incinerate, they would put into landfill sites. The NDP, our caucus and I personally have taken the same position over the last 20 years: that communities deal with their own garbage, and northern Ontario is not a dumping ground for the large cities in southern Ontario.

Mr Galt: It was interesting to listen to the speech. He really didn't talk about Bill 82. I interpret that as a lot of support, and he did indicate support for it. It was great to hear the amount of support that is coming from the other side of the House on this particular issue.

I heard the member for Timiskaming talk about Kirkland Lake and the mine site there. As a matter of fact, it has gone through a full environmental assessment. What the Ministry of the Environment is about, and what happens in situations like that, is to ensure that whatever site is proposed by the proponent is indeed environmentally sound, and that's what the environmental assessment review came up with in the end, that it would work. Now, when it comes to zoning and all the other things, as the member knows, it relates to municipal activity. If you go back a while ago, I understand there was a referendum up there on this, and even the mayor of the day of Kirkland Lake supported it.

I listened to some of the comments that were made in the House. I wasn't here until June 1995, but I really wonder what legislation, what kind of reg reform, what kinds of other things happened in the Ministry of the Environment. I'm aware the EBR went through in the last government, but it seems there was so little done over

those 10 years. I'm waiting to hear the wonderful things that must have happened during those 10 years, but I don't hear any member of either of the opposition parties commenting on those wonderful things that happened. It seems to me it was a lot of talk and very little action.

But this government came in and this is the fourth bill we've had on environmental protection. We had a very intense review of the regulations to update them, something that has never been done before. Certainly, as you're quite aware, those regulations are clearer, better and stronger in protecting the environment.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the member for Timiskaming for presenting the case with regard to the Adams site and the garbage proposal to the people of Ontario in a very clear and succinct fashion. I have to suggest to you, though, and anyone who thinks there is a conflict of opinion must understand, that this particular proposal has manifested itself in many different ways over the years.

It first started off as a recycling centre, with much spinoff industry attached to the community. Obviously it would have been a good project at that point in time, at least to pursue in study format. Now it's simply a garbage dump, a garbage site. That is not acceptable to the people of Kirkland Lake.

I want to commend the member for doing what we in this House should always do: consult the people we represent. I have to suggest to you as well that when you get 32% of a survey back, that is extremely high. The accuracy level is certainly very important for us to base some type of opinion and decision on. When you get approximately 82% of the people in the community saying "No way" to a proposal, I would suggest that if the member were to stand up here and say anything else except that he's against the proposal, then I think the member isn't doing his job. We are here to represent the people who have elected us to this esteemed chamber, and to do that, we must consult them. The member has done that. He's done that in a very professional way, and I would suggest to you that those municipal councils should listen well to the results of this survey.

I would suggest to you that if environmental laws had been in place from the beginning, we wouldn't have this problem.

Mr Len Wood: On a point of order, Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

M. Pouliot : C'est avec un intérêt particulier que j'ai écouté les membres du gouvernement responsable pour le dépôt du projet de loi, et aussi l'opposition officielle. La mémoire a commencé à leur faire défaut dès le début de leur présentation. You will recall — and I know that as the environment critic for the New Democratic Party of

Ontario you follow every dossier meticulously, you study, you know, you understand every line — what the government is sanctioning is parenting what the New Democratic Party put into effect before we were somewhat rudely interrupted, before we were relegated to being the third party in this House.

Let's hear it for democracy, of course. We respect the opinion of the electorate, but we were just on the verge of striking a co-operative endeavour. The Minister of the Environment and our former Premier, Bob Rae, had asked me to be the Minister of Transportation. We were moving directly to reduce, to make emissions standards higher and therefore reduce emissions. Now the government conveniently takes all the credit. It has a great deal of difficulty saying, "We are just following through on the good deeds of the previous government."

I also listened intently to the possibility of a garbage dump in the riding of Timiskaming. It strikes me, if my memory serves me right, that there were some advocates during the last election saying, "Move the Toronto garbage there," but now that we have a survey that says, "Toronto, keep your garbage because you're the one who generates the garbage and its disposal should be localized." I'm not saying it's a change of mind —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Ramsay: I'm pleased to have the members comment on my speech. I believe my survey is accurate because it basically reflects other referendums and votes that had taken place in the area over the last few years. Back in 1995, Evanturel township, near the town of Englehart, conducted a referendum where 95% of the people said no to Metro Toronto garbage. Hilliard township, south of that, in 1995 polled 149 of its residents and 110 responded. Of those, 106 responded no, which would be over 95% against. In Dymond township, a similar referendum attracted almost half of the electorate and showed 93% were opposed to the project. Similar responses in 1995 were the cases in Dack township, Chamberlain township, Boston and Round Lake. These are areas surrounding and south of the site.

I believe, while anybody can certainly question the methodology of direct mail response cards into homes, and while you're only going to get a response from one person in that household, the response there is very consistent with what other referendums have said. I would say to the government that you should not allow the exportation of garbage from one jurisdiction into another where the residents don't approve. I think that most municipalities in Ontario would want to be assured that there is a willing host region that would receive their waste if that's what the municipality wanted to do. It's my determination that Timiskaming is not a willing host.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1801.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
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Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
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Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
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Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président		
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)		
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)		
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
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Oriole	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
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Prescott and Russell /			Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Prescott et Russell			Duncan, Dwight (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox-			Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
South Hastings /			Parker, John L. (PC)
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Hastings-Sud			Klees, Frank (PC)
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		Windsor-Walkerville	
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S-D-G & East Grenville /	Bradley, James J. (L)		
S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Proese, Tom (PC)		
	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Bart Maves, Peter L. Preston
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczkowski

Social development / Affaires sociales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Dwight Duncan
Toby Barrett, Marion Boyd, Jack Carroll, Annamarie Castrilli,
Alex Cullen, Dwight Duncan, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees,
Lyn McLeod, Lillian Ross, Bruce Smith
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 7 December 1998

Lundi 7 décembre 1998

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 December 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 décembre 1998

The House met at 1832.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet commencing Monday, December 14, 1998; and

That, pursuant to standing order 9(e)(i), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 12 midnight on December 14, 15, 16 and 17, 1998, for the purpose of conducting government business, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House until the next sessional day.

We have sat so far 115 sessional days in this session. If this motion is passed, we will have sat 130 sessional days before the House rises. This is actually more sessional days than any other Ontario government has ever sat in a single calendar year.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You count the afternoon and the evening as a day.

Hon Mr Turnbull: My good friend from St Catharines has a certain amount of editorial on this and he agrees that we have in fact sat a lot more because we have been sitting in the evenings in addition, so this is a rather record-breaking session by the Legislature. It is, of course, in line with the fact that we made commitments to the electorate that significant changes had to be made in the economy of Ontario so that we would once again enjoy the prosperity that Ontarians have been used to.

During this period since the government was elected, we have had the creation in this province of 461,000 net new jobs, not as some of my colleagues on the opposition benches would like to say, McJobs, but predominantly high-tech, high-paying jobs which are predominantly full time. Ontario is at this moment leading the G7 in terms of job creation and economic growth. We now have an unemployment rate in this province of 6.9%. This is the lowest unemployment rate in a decade. Through careful shepherding of the economy, we have now got the deficit down to an annual rate projected for this year of \$3.6 billion. I want to reflect on the fact that when we became the government we had a projected deficit that year of \$11.3 billion. So \$3.6 billion is the projected deficit this year compared with \$11.3 billion.

Yes, we could have eliminated it entirely, but that would have meant we would have gone too quickly and we could have disrupted some of the economy. It was

important that as we reduced the size of the civil service, we did this in a careful and thoughtful way, in such a way that would ensure that the private sector would be able to take up the slack in terms of job creation, and that's indeed what has happened.

When we became the government we were spending \$1.2 million every hour of the day, every day of the year, more than we were taking in in revenue. We are delighted to point out that we are well on track to achieving our balanced budget projection, which we set out in the document that we put out one year before the election, of balancing the provincial budget in the budget year 2000-01.

The interesting thing is that my friends on the Liberal bench have suggested that we're going too fast, and yet at the same time those very same people will complain that we have continued to run a deficit in those years. Clearly it isn't possible to not run a deficit if you are slowly reducing the size of the civil service and slowly cutting the size of government. You have to do this in a considered and gentle way and that is what we have achieved. This is why we have this spectacular growth in the province.

We are now spending \$18.5 billion on health care. That's fully \$1.1 billion more than the last NDP government, and this, despite the massive cuts by the federal Liberal government to health care. Only a few weeks ago I listened to a speech by the president of the Ontario Medical Association pointing out that when Canada went into the Canada Health Act, the federal government was paying 50 cents on the dollar. They're down to nine cents on the dollar, which has meant considerable difficulty for both the last NDP government and the present Conservative government in achieving their health care targets.

Why are we asking for a one-week extension of the sitting? The fact is that we have more important legislation to pass. For example, we have to pass the Tax Credits and Revenue Protection Act, which includes the Ontario child care supplement. This is a tax credit of \$85 a month for families which qualify.

Our government has only passed 18 bills so far this session, but this includes legislation such as reduced red tape, reform of the energy market in Ontario and further income tax cuts for all working Ontarians. It might be useful at this juncture just to give some of the statistics as to the amount of time that has been spent on passing legislation. As I say, we have only passed 18 bills in this session.

In the same second session of the NDP government, they passed a considerably larger number than we have

passed now. They passed 32 bills in the second session. The Liberals passed 89 bills during that session. This undoubtedly was due to the amount of cooperation that the opposition parties gave at that time. The average amount of time that was spent on second reading of a bill during our government has been five hours and 49 minutes, as compared with the average amount of time spent on an NDP bill in the second session of three hours and 55 minutes, and for the Liberals, guess what? Only one hour and 38 minutes in second reading.

1840

The third reading of bills is also quite revealing. We have spent an average of one hour and 47 minutes; the NDP, two hours and two minutes; but the Liberals, 15 minutes. So if the NDP wonder why it took so long to get through third reading and our members wonder why, we see how co-operative previous governments were towards them.

Committee travel is also very revealing. During the 36th Parliament, the PC government has spent 773 hours and 29 minutes; the Liberals spent 349 hours and 45 minutes; the NDP, 645 hours. Undoubtedly, in terms of the amount of consultation on our bills, we far outstrip previous governments. This is the reason we have been forced to time-allocate 14 bills in this session. We wish we didn't have to time-allocate, but the problem is that with some quite insignificant bills, we're still spending an awful lot of time, and this has forced us to move it along, but we have still spent considerably more time in considering all bills than previous governments.

The real reason for this session tonight is just to ask the members of this Legislature to agree to sitting one week longer. It is in fact one week that the NDP took away from the House calendar. We used to sit on that extra week, but in point of fact the NDP, when they changed the House rules, truncated the session. We're just asking them to put that back.

I'm sure my good friend from St Catharines will have some sage words to utter over what I have said, and my good friend from London Centre no doubt will join this.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): London Left.

Hon Mr Turnbull: London Left, yes, and a good job too. I look forward to hearing what my colleagues have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Further debate.

Mr Bradley: I'm pleased that the member has left me considerable time to make up for his relatively short speech this evening. I appreciate his moderation. He wasn't bombastic. He was trying to be charming to the House, no doubt, as he is to the Conservative caucus all the time when he's trying to keep them in line.

I remember a letter I saw, I think from Garry Guzzo, the member for Ottawa-Rideau, a rather lengthy letter that was read out in the House.

Hon Mr Turnbull: He's a big fan.

Mr Bradley: I don't know what that means.

I think he was complaining about favouritism being shown to the member for Nepean over certain bills in that

area. I don't know why that is, and I don't know the inside; all I know is that it was a three-page letter and provided some rather interesting reading for members of the House.

I want to say, first of all, that we all know that if the government would only bring its legislation in earlier in the session, instead of scrambling to do something early in the session, we could deal with legislation in a more orderly fashion. We could allocate less time to those bills that were not so significant and contentious, and we could allocate more time to those pieces of legislation that require greater analysis and debate in the House. But the government comes in at the last minute with bills and then puts the gun to the head of the opposition — I don't mean a real gun — and says, "You have to pass these bills." Then they phone up the interest groups and say, "Well, we want to pass this bill, but the opposition won't let it go through." Of course, what we really know is that the bill was brought in very late in the session and that was the game plan of the government.

I notice that on contentious issues particularly, the government is quick to use its closure motions, that is, motions cutting off debate. On bills which are not so significant or where the government feels there is probably a good consensus in the province and not much opposition to them, they tend to let those debates go on at some length. They want to hold hearings on bills where nobody requests the hearings just so they can parade into certain communities and try to make a point on a piece of legislation they believe is popular but that nobody really cares much about one way or another.

I want to deal with a number of issues that are before us. There is, of course, the broad issue of education out there and the way in which the government has dealt with education. First of all, let me say that if you went across the province and talked to people who support the Liberals, Conservatives or NDP, any one of those parties, or had no particular affiliation, about some of the things that are forthcoming and have been for the last several years in education, you'd find a consensus. For instance, if you talked about establishing a new curriculum, that's an ongoing process. Nobody objects to that. They may talk about specific pieces in the curriculum or how quickly it is put into effect, with what kind of notice and who is writing it, but essentially if you said, "Is anybody in the province opposed to an updated curriculum?" they'd say no.

Then you'd talk about standardized testing. If you said to any of the three political parties in this House, because all three have been involved in it in some way or other, "Do you think we should end all standardized testing?" everybody would say, "No, of course not." You have to use the standardized testing in an appropriate way, you have to implement it in a reasonable way, but if you asked people, "Should we end it?" they'd say, "Of course not." So there's no argument over that. If you talk about standards in education, I think most people want to see high standards in education. So there are a number of issues that you look at out there. Do you want to have

parental input? Of course you want to have parental input into education, in a meaningful sense.

What has happened is that the government has decided, rightly or wrongly, depending on who you talk to, to pick a fight with those who deliver education on the front line, largely the members of the teaching profession, although others within the education system would say the same. I know there are members who would like to think, as they like to paint it, "Well, it's not the teachers; it's the teachers' union," as they would say on the other side. But you have to talk to individual teachers and see that they in fact are very perturbed by what they see happening — not everything that's happening. If you said, "Do you want to have report cards which are updated, which everybody can understand?" again, I think people would agree.

If you look at the way this is being implemented, the devil is in the detail very often. If you look at the detail, you may find some real problems with it but, by and large, you'll see that people want to see those kinds of ongoing changes taking place in education. But this government has done it in a very disruptive way and has openly picked a fight with the teachers who deliver those services in the classrooms across the province and with some of the administration, particularly at the school level.

As a result, we have today, in my observation, and I think most people who have looked at education over the years would agree, the lowest morale that I have ever seen in education. I just haven't seen that kind of low morale before. There have been ups and downs from time to time as issues confront education, but is it ever depressing to see people who otherwise are enthusiastic about their jobs, who look forward to going to school every day to work with the students and so on, just depressed by those circumstances, or the large number of people who retire the very day they can retire. I can remember not that long ago when people didn't retire even in the year they could legally retire or in which they were eligible. Now I see people who leave the day they can leave. That's how depressed they are by what they see happening in education. I wish that weren't the case, I really do. I wish you could see the kind of enthusiasm that we used to see in years gone by in education.

1850

A lot of it was the government deliberately picking a fight with teachers in the province. I know that plays well with some people. It plays well with a certain crowd who never liked teachers or who never liked people in the public sector. That goes over very well. So when they come to the fundraiser, they'll applaud when the Premier makes some disparaging remark about members of the teaching profession or others who are involved in education.

But, boy, do you pay a price for that in terms of morale. It would have been much better if you had worked to develop a consensus, and I think it could have been done, to enlist the support and the enthusiasm of people, particularly those again who deliver the front-line education services. If you could have done that, you could have

made some changes in education which people would be enthusiastic about and excited about.

You see, what you essentially were doing in many cases was going back to the future. Both the education system and the students in it today are far different than they were when most of us went to school. We all tend to think of education in terms of when we were there and what it was like. For instance, when you look at the number of students in a classroom, people will say, "Well, I can remember when there were 35 or 38 people in a classroom." Keep in mind that in that classroom it was likely that two or three might have come from what we would call dysfunctional families. Now, whether we like it or not, so often the case is that over half the children in that classroom are from dysfunctional families, and they have special challenges to meet, special difficulties to confront. Having been there a number of years ago, I can tell you that when I look at the situation today, it's much more difficult than it was a number of years ago to be in the classroom.

That's unfortunate and it is a challenge. Whether we like it or not, there's much more social work for those teachers to do than was the case before. Ideally, what you would want is that they would come in and teach the children either the academic skills or the technical skills, and there might be some social skills there and cultural opportunities and sports opportunities. But today there's an awful lot of social input that has to be part of the education system.

So it's much more difficult, and yet what Bill 160 did in effect was to eliminate, by the minister's own count and estimate, 7,500 teaching positions from the schools of Ontario. Now, you say, "Well, they are hiring new teachers." Yes. Some people have retired. In fact, a significant number have retired. But overall, you will have removed from the system 7,500 positions, according to Dave Johnson, the Minister of Education, in the hallway in the Whitney Block when he was putting in his last-minute amendments to Bill 160.

Even on that occasion the government said, "We want to see more contact time between teachers and students." Probably a lot of the public wanted to see that. So those representing the teachers in the negotiations said: "We'll solve that. Why don't we make the school day longer? Why don't we eliminate a couple of the professional development days?" In other words, they came up with a proposal. That was rejected by the government. The reason it was rejected by the government was that the government's whole intention was to get rid of 7,500 teaching positions and take over \$1 billion out of the education system. You will see the amount in raw numbers increase, but you will also see a substantial increase in the number of students in the system, so on a per capita basis, what we have is a reduction of the investment in education.

I think the government thought it would score some real marks with people, some real points, by taking on the teachers and showing everybody. But they forgot that the teachers are the wives or husbands of people, the

daughters and sons, the aunts and uncles, the next-door neighbours, the best friends of people. So the government message which was being purveyed with million-dollar advertising programs on television and in newspapers and in pamphlets coming to our doors was counteracted by people who had personal experience in education and could share that with their relatives and their neighbours and their friends and others. What essentially we want in education is a grand coalition of people who want to work together to always improve the education system. Unfortunately, this government chose instead to pick a fight with the teachers of this province.

Really, the Bill 160 fight was not the government of Ontario versus the teachers of Ontario. It was a fight, if you want to use that term, between those who believed in a strong, publicly funded, vibrant, high-quality education system and those who did not. It was parents and students and teachers working together against Bill 160 because they recognized what would happen. We knew there would be school closings as a result of the new funding formula.

Now the government has bought peace for a year, they've thrown some money at it for a year, and people are relieved by that, quite frankly, but that is only for a year. If the government were to be re-elected, you would find that they would go back to the old method of funding and we would see schools such as Merritt High School in St Catharines or Lakeport or Lakebreeze or St Catharines Collegiate, all these schools that everybody mentions as being possible candidates for closure — you'd see that happening as a result of the government expenditure cuts.

We must recognize that those school buildings are not simply for use during the day to deliver straight educational services. They are also community centres. They are also centres where we have child care taking place, day care for children. Senior citizens use them from time to time. The Cubs and the Scouts and the Brownies and the Guides and other groups use those buildings. People use them for recreational purposes, for cultural purposes. They mean so much to a neighbourhood and to a community, and yet this government doesn't seem to care about neighbourhoods or communities but simply about finding money which was essentially, during their years in power, to fund the tax cut, which again helped the wealthiest people in the province the most.

So in education we hear the issues come forward. The government tried a lot of public relations. They were going to buy a lot of textbooks, but they had to rush because they had to have some photo opportunities for Conservative members, to show off at the door, as though the money came out of Conservative members' pockets for these textbooks.

The member for Fort William, Lyn McLeod, raised yet another issue today where one of the companies that received a letter — because they all got one. Every small business in Ontario got a letter paid for by the taxpayers saying what a great job they were doing, but some of these were denied the opportunity to provide textbooks: Ontario

companies denied the opportunity to provide textbooks to our schools in this province.

So what we have is a chaotic situation. If you wanted to get fights going in education, if you wanted to set teachers against trustees, elementary teachers against secondary teachers, Catholic teachers against non-Catholic teachers, the caretaking and maintenance staff against somebody else, the secretarial staff, if you wanted to put the cat amongst the pigeons, you've been lucky. You've done that. You've got them fighting with one another, and I have to remind them from time to time that the real source of the problem is the Mike Harris government.

Remember, the trustees just a number of months ago were standing shoulder to shoulder with those who delivered educational services and the ancillary services that were involved in education, and yet we see the fights going on now because this government has decided through its funding formula that it's not going to have a system which is stable, which is non-chaotic, which has people working together. What you've brought about is instability and chaos. Surely that must end, but it will end only when you show respect for those who work in the educational field, and that is something this government has not done.

In the field of health care, we have seen again — you have to look at the overall policy of the government. At a time when you are running a deficit — I underline that: at a time when you are running a significant deficit — you are involved in a very substantial cut in income taxes. First of all, when you cut income taxes the way you have, the people who benefit the most are the bank presidents. They are applauding. The senior people in industry who make lots of money got the most money back from the 30% tax cut.

1900

If you could stipulate — and you can't, of course; it would be silly to say so — that everybody who got the 30% tax had to spend all of that money in Ontario on Ontario-made goods or services, then you might have seen some effect, but very largely, particularly among wealthier people, it just meant putting more into an RRSP or paying off some personal debt or perhaps going on another foreign holiday or buying a luxury good that may have been produced somewhere else, so that its stimulative effect was virtually non-existent.

Even conservative economists — I have quoted many times Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University, referred to by some columnists as "Frosty the No man" or "Professor Negative" or "Dr No" because he has always been a person very careful with the public tax dollar, as a member of St Catharines city council — he and others of his ilk, small-c conservative professors, would tell you that the combination of deep cuts in services, in programs provided by the government, combined with a tax cut has in fact a contractionary effect. However, countervailing that has been the boom in the United States economy. The province of Ontario trades very substantially with the United States, and the United States has had low interest rates.

By the way, we in Canada have had low interest rates. There are a few positive effects of this that we should know about it. Remember when the Mulroney government was in power, and many of the people here supported the Mulroney government, they had high interest rates. Some say no and I won't say who, but they had a policy of high interest rates, so we were going to see Ontario governments, if they were borrowing money, paying high interest rates.

We have low interest rates now, so when the Ontario government borrows money at this time, it gets it at a much more reasonable rate, and that's a benefit. But it also stimulates the economy. There is no question that low interest rates are a great stimulus. That's what Bill Clinton has done south of the border. I would think that Premier Harris has probably already sent a letter to Bill Clinton thanking him for his economic policies, which have had such a great stimulative effect on Ontario; or if he wanted to give credit to the Republican Congress, he could write to them.

But I'm going to tell you that if the US economy ever goes into the dumper, there's a problem here in Ontario. Remember when people used to say, "Look at British Columbia, it is recession-proof," back when we in Ontario had a recession. That's because British Columbia has a substantial amount of its trade with the Far East. The Far East was not in recession at that time. Now, however, British Columbia is not enjoying that kind of economic growth because they rely on huge exports to the Far East and the Far East is in recession.

I know I'm going to get a copy someday of the letter that the Premier has sent to Bill Clinton thanking him for his policies, which have had a huge spillover effect in Ontario.

I want to go back to the issue of health care and what is happening in health care. I knew there was trouble coming the day the government introduced Bill 26. You will remember that was introduced the first year the government was in power, in December 1995. The government wanted to ram this bill through. It altered or amended some 47 or 48 statutes of the province. It was called an "omnibus bill," or as a previous speaker referred to it, an "ominous bill." I agree with him it was ominous. It was an ominous omnibus bill.

We in the opposition called it a "bully bill" because it had so many huge powers which would be concentrated in the hands of a few cabinet ministers and of course the advisers to the Premier, the always present and all-powerful, non-elected advisers to the Premier, the people I call the "whiz kids." One of those provisions was the establishment of what was called the "Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission"; I call it the "Ontario hospital destruction commission." It was to be all-powerful and have the ability, without any legislation, without any consideration by this House, to close hospitals, to drastically alter the role of hospitals and to merge hospitals, and close hospitals it has. What's the last count now? Forty-five various kinds of hospitals have been either forced to close or forced to merge in this

province, including Maplehurst in Thorold, Ontario. That's one people haven't mentioned, although I saw the president of the union write a letter saying how perturbed he was about this, and I agree with him, but I must say to him that it was inevitable, with this government's policies, that you were going to see hospitals like that close.

The chief government whip would want me to mention Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines. We have three excellent hospitals in St Catharines: the Shaver Hospital, which is a chronic care and rehabilitation hospital — adjacent to it is the Niagara Peninsula Rehabilitation Centre, by the way; we have the St Catharines General Hospital, which has provided and continues to provide outstanding service to the people of our community; and we have the Hotel Dieu Hospital.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): So how many hospitals do you have?

Mr Bradley: What we have needed is all of those hospitals and all of the services they provide. However, the government decided that it would start withdrawing funding from the operating costs of the hospitals, that is, the everyday costs of operating the hospitals, and then it had a local commission set up that said, "Tell us how to restructure," and the plan would be to take away I think it was \$44 million from the operating costs over a few years. So of course they're going to come in and say, "Close hospitals."

Then we had the Health Services Restructuring Commission come into town to slam the door shut on the Hotel Dieu Hospital, board up the windows, bolt the doors tight and say, "Everything is moving down the street to the general hospital." I was on the general hospital board and I can tell you it is a top-notch hospital. It has good people working with it, it continues to provide excellent service to people in our community but it is not —

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Where do you stand on the issue?

Mr Bradley: The member asks me where I stand. I stand four-square in favour of all the hospitals in our community. I'm standing behind every one of our hospitals, shoulder to shoulder with those who believe we need all the hospitals in our community, so I'm glad my friend from St Catharines-Brock asks.

I want to see the Hotel Dieu Hospital stay open to continue to deliver the services it does in terms of oncology. Chemotherapy is delivered at the Hotel Dieu Hospital in a very compassionate way, with some excellent physicians and nurses and supplementary staff there to assist. We have a kidney dialysis centre. I met with Dr Broski from that hospital, by the way, a young doctor who is very expert in the field of kidney dialysis and kidney diseases, who said that the projection that the commission had for the future needs for kidney dialysis in the Niagara region was way out of whack. In other words, they underestimated the investment needed in terms of dollars, and they underestimated significantly the space that would be required.

There's a wonderful palliative care unit at the Hotel Dieu Hospital. There are educational services provided for

diabetics. There's a detox centre which is part of the operation. There's a huge helicopter pad for emergencies, when needed. There are services for people who have autism and the challenges that have to be met with autism. It's wonderful hospital, and I knew how wonderful it was because I heard my friend from St Catharines-Brock read a letter from the Premier on their 50th anniversary this year. I don't know whether it was framed or a scroll, but he had a wonderful presentation to make. The Premier said, "You've done a wonderful job, and good luck in the future."

The good luck they got was that when the card game came along, they didn't get any aces dealt to them, they got all deuces and the doors were shut. The boots were put to the Religious Hospitallers of St Joseph. "They're gone, they're out the door," he said. I remember well the leaders' debate in May 1995. Robert Fisher, one of the panellists, asked the question, "Would your health care changes involve the closing of hospitals?" and the Premier said — the member for Chatham-Kent knows this and I'm going to repeat it again — "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals."

A couple of years later we have at least 45 hospitals with the doors closed or forced to merge or drastically altered. We have a lot of others under a cloud. Yes, maybe for now, before the election, some of these rural hospitals are OK, but what happens after the election if this government gets re-elected? I think there could be some more closures coming if that were the case.

1910

I remember Dr David Foot, author of the best-selling *Broom, Bust and Echo*, coming to speak to Brock University. There was a sellout at night. I managed to get in in the afternoon session when the students were there because they were sold out at night for the business community and others.

A student got up and asked him a question, "Dr Foot, looking at the demographics of the Niagara Peninsula, because that's what your book's all about and that's what your speech was about, looking at the demographic picture of the Niagara Peninsula which has now the largest number per capita of senior citizens anywhere in Ontario, what advice would you give to Mike Harris?" He said, "Don't close hospitals." Of course if you read his book, the section that deals with health care, he says, "If you close hospitals, you're going to end up opening them 10 years from now."

I know hospital care has changed because now they kick people out the door in a quicker and sicker fashion. If you want to know why, ask the people who receive them at home. Ask the people who are now at the nursing homes or at the senior citizens' homes. They will tell you that the patients they get coming back to them today are certainly not in as good condition as they once were. I know people at Linhaven in St Catharines, for instance, would know that the kind of care required for seniors who come back to Linhaven is a much heavier and more comprehensive kind of care than was the care before the government decided that people had to get out as soon as possible.

You have women who are delivering children who are now asked to leave hospital pretty abruptly. People here used to make jokes about other countries where you'd see people who had to leave the hospital right away and go out and work in the fields or something. I'll tell you something, we're not far from that when you think that women have to leave hospitals now at a much earlier date than before.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Are you committing to keep them in longer, Jim?

Mr Bradley: My good friend the reverend from the west end of Toronto knows that, that you have people now who have to leave much more quickly. There are a lot of complications that can take place as a result of pregnancy, and I see the problem. I hear from the people; they call my constituency office. They'll be perturbed today when they hear that to make money to operate all these machines, the MRIs — they love to see the MRIs, but everybody thinks that somehow Mike Harris comes down and hands people a paid-for magnetic resonance imager. You know how much they paid for it? They paid nothing for it, and then there are the operating costs. They pay about one sixth of what it costs to operate an MRI. All they do is give permission for it to be there, and we're always happy to see that, but they don't give the money to go with it to operate it.

We have a situation now where to get money, some special people are able to get their MRI ahead of time or they now have animals who are able to get an MRI before human beings, because the hospital has to make money to be able to run the MRIs. If they get a magnetic resonance imager in the hospital, what you have to know is that since they get only about one sixth of the cost to operate it, they have to start gutting, or as the member for York South said, cannibalizing their other services to be able to operate this high-tech equipment, and that's most unfortunate.

What I'm saying to this government is, the commission may have told you one thing, and you like to think they're at arm's length, but I'm going to tell you, you should keep Hotel Dieu Hospital open. I have petitions in my desk with 6,000 names on these petitions from people in St Catharines. This adds to the over 60,000 names which have appeared in petitions in St Catharines against the closing of the Hotel Dieu Hospital.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): You read it twice already.

Mr Bradley: People are not always cognizant of the precise way in which they must be filled out, so when they're presented, they can't always be accepted. But we have them. We have the signatures. They're from people all over the Niagara region, not just St Catharines, I say to my friend from Perth, but people all over the Niagara region who have received that outstanding service at the Hotel Dieu.

We need a strong, vibrant St Catharines General Hospital to deal with all the excellent programs, procedures and projects they have there. We need the Hotel Dieu and we need the Shaver, and we don't need Mike Harris closing our hospitals in our community. I'm confident that all the members in the Niagara region would

agree with that particular proposition, just as St Catharines city council passed a resolution in favour of that, and so did Niagara Falls council for that matter.

People will say, "What is all this advertising about, then?" What we see nightly on our television sets, daily in our newspapers, weekly coming into our mailboxes — and the member for St Catharines-Brock holds up one of them. He can bring it over here and I can hold it up if he wishes. These are pieces of advertising all paid for out of the pockets of the taxpayers of this province.

I remember that my friend the member for Lincoln used to be the president of the taxpayers' coalition in our community. I would think his colleagues must be enraged by this squandering of millions upon millions of dollars on self-serving, blatantly political partisan advertising of the kind we're seeing. The government has spent, by our calculation now, close to \$50 million on that kind of advertising.

They announced a new advertising program today because they wanted to deflect some of the criticism away from their self-serving advertising. This is the kind that advertises Ontario south of the border. I asked my good friend Al Palladini, because he used to say "my pal Al" in his own advertisements. I asked the minister —

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): What ads were those?

Mr Bradley: When he had his Ford business, he said that. I asked him, "You will ensure it would not be the case of course that those ads would appear on television stations along the border to be viewed by Canadians, would it?" Of course the answer is yes. Once again, we'll see the smiling face of Mike Harris and all the song and dance about how great Ontario is.

If they did that in Kentucky, as they're going to, I applaud — I say we need that; no problem — if they did it in Seattle or California, but guess where they're doing it: New York state, Ohio, Michigan; people can get these channels in Ontario. They can't even do that without some kind of twist to it that's favourable to the government, though that is not, I want to say to the member for Kitchener, the kind of advertising to which we object.

I thought a good bit about advertising they could do. Let me say what you could do that I think would be applauded by the people of this province. If you were to advertise substantially south of the border about the low Canadian dollar and how favourable it is for American tourists to come here to Ontario, let me tell you, you'd be bringing a lot of business to this province in terms of tourism and that would be good.

1920

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The members of the public who watch the House regularly must think this is a rerun. The member for St Catharines brings the same speech. I was wondering what he's talking about. It's supposed to be the House calendar motion. He's made no reference to it now in almost 40 minutes.

The Acting Speaker: If you had paid attention to your colleague also, you would have noticed that he didn't follow what was on the order paper. I'm trying to be

lenient. If you want me to be stricter, I'd be very pleased to do so.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Speaker, we want some excitement on the order paper. He is as dry as dust.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nipigon, the Speaker has the floor.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Please.

Mr Bradley: What I'm talking about are some of the issues I wish were on the calendar that perhaps — who knows? — may appear on the calendar. The member for Dufferin-Peel understands that. He has heard me speak in this House before. He knows I am talking about that very thing.

Let me talk about some other subjects, since I seem to have annoyed the government over the advertising, although I must say one other thing: They talked about this Drive Clean program, and the only thing we've seen from it yet is the advertising, that it's coming. So are the Russians. Remember that movie, *The Russians are Coming! The Russians are Coming!* It seems to be advertising that. We haven't seen anything on that.

My friend from Belleville, from Quinte, is here. He would want me to talk about gas prices. It's not a very good time to talk about them. Gas prices are down to 44 cents now, so maybe it's not a good time. I know the member would like to bring this forward. Heaven knows he's probably being blocked by some people in the cabinet. That's what I think it is. He would like to see, as I would like to see, a predatory pricing law which doesn't allow the oil barons to sell to their own gas stations at one price, a lower price, and to the independents at a different price, a higher price.

What that does in the long run is drive the independents out of business. That's why in this calendar I'm waiting, and in the last two weeks maybe the government will bring it in. I heard the Premier huffing and puffing about prices this summer. He sent out — what was that crowd called? — the gas-busters, or something like that. They got out there with their Brownie cameras and took pictures of the prices. The prices went up on the long weekend anyway.

There are two things the government could do. They could actually freeze prices of gasoline. The member will remember — he is as advanced and as up in years as I am to remember — when Bill Davis, in 1975, when we were both kids, brought in none other than a bill freezing the price of gasoline for 60 days. I know some cynics said: "That was just before the election in 1975. That's what that was all about." I'm not cynical like that. I didn't believe that for a moment. I think Bill Davis just saw that those prices were soaring and that the provincial government had the power to stop it. What does this government do? They say: "I'm going to get my big brother after you. We're going to get the feds after you." They don't want to do anything about it. That's gas prices.

Mr Baird: And they cut their price right away when Doug was on the case.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, you don't have the floor yet.

Mr Bradley: I want to talk as well about the new election rules. I thought maybe in this calendar motion we would see reference to a bill which would rescind the previous bill allowing money to play such a role in politics.

Members of the House will remember that Mike Harris was not happy enough with the bill which put caps on all expenditures that could be carried out by political parties during a campaign. There was a cap on it. Now the sky's the limit on such things as polling and research. The definition of that can be as wide as the definition of on-topic speeches in this House. I can tell you there's a great worry that this Conservative Party will spend millions upon millions of dollars on that.

Second, they've allowed a greater expenditure at the riding level, which means the party with the most money has the greatest advantage. It means the party that caters to the richest and most powerful people in the province will be able to get the most money in. What you've done now as a government is that Mike Harris said: "The limits now for giving to parties are not high enough. Let's raise them. Let's get them up so Mr Barnicke," or some of the other big givers to the party, "can give even more money to the party." I look at that and say that's not good for the democratic system.

Look what happened south of the border, where money plays such a significant role in politics. You see senators, congressmen, assemblymen, almost anybody in politics greatly influenced by money and by who gives the money. That's not healthy for the system. I think the government has made a big mistake in doing this. Yes, it gains a temporary advantage, because that party has lots of money; there's no question about that. But the democratic system overall does not benefit when money continues to play a role, or even a more significant role, as it will in the future.

I'm looking for a bill that will rescind that particular bill. That's why I'm addressing that matter in this motion this evening, dealing with the parliamentary calendar.

There's something else that some of us may have gotten calls about and I hope the government would change its mind on it. I've mentioned this in other speeches in this House. That is the prostate-specific antigen test, the PSA test, which is one tool which may be used to detect cancer in men.

I've had telephone calls and letters from people. I got one the other day from a person who lives in Ernie Eves's riding — he's a friend of Ernie's and a friend of mine at the same time — who wrote to me about going through the procedure. He's being treated for prostate cancer at this time. He mentioned how happy he was that he had taken this test, because it was a major factor in detecting it. That's not covered by OHIP, yet there are other tests which are covered, and should be covered; for instance, many of the tests to detect breast cancer, which is a terror for many women in the province, the very word of it. There is not a cost for those, nor should there be. That's

exactly as it should be. Those costs should be covered by OHIP.

Many men, particularly as they advance in age, have the same concern about prostate cancer and would hope this government would remove that cost, that user fee, and cover that under OHIP. That's something that probably has support within the three caucuses in this House.

I want to talk as well about municipal downloading. There's a new mantra from members of this government. They want to blame local government for increasing property taxes. Of course, what we're seeing is exactly what we saw in the state of New Jersey. That's where Mike Harris patterned his actions after. New Jersey cut the state income tax by 30%, downloaded a pile of responsibilities on municipalities and property taxes went up. It's easier sometimes to point the finger at somebody who's close by. When people get the property tax bill, they often relate that to the local government. Remember, the Harris government passed a bill in this Legislature which censored municipalities, in other words, did not allow municipalities to put on the property tax bill the amount of the increase which was due to the downloading of responsibilities from the provincial government on to local government.

In the Niagara region, the difference has been some \$18 million. I can tell you that over the years I have not been one of the defenders of regional government, but in this particular case I think they got the short end of the stick because the downloading went to not the area municipalities, the local municipalities, but to the regional government.

They had to assume responsibilities such as land ambulances, public housing, some of the social service costs, public health costs, nursing homes and so on. There were a number of shifts and changes that took place while the negotiations were on, but ultimately the local government was faced with the unenviable choice of making further cuts, and let me tell you, local governments have already cut their expenditures and had user fees. They had to do three things. They had to cut services even more, pretty essential services, at the local level; they had to raise property taxes, which never makes anybody happy, because property taxes do not take into account a person's ability to pay as income taxes do; or they had to raise user fees. User fees are not a great imposition on people of wealth but they are on people of somewhat modest means. So we see, for instance, in our national winter sport of hockey, there are children today, I tell you, who are not able to play hockey in leagues because the cost is too high. Even though everybody tries to help them out, the cost is very high. That's most unfortunate but that's what user fees are about.

1930

I notice members, particularly in this case my colleague the Conservative member for Simcoe Centre — usually three quarters of his speech is denouncing the federal government and the other quarter is denouncing the two opposition parties, unlike the member for Brampton South, for instance, who I thought gave a pretty good speech in

this House the other night. It dealt with a bill and it was very straightforward.

Mr Baird: Brampton North.

Mr Bradley: Brampton North it was in that case. Sorry.

He said something like: "Why doesn't the federal government do something about all the tobacco sales that are taking place? Isn't that awful?" Well, this government has a chance to join in a suit against the tobacco companies. I wish I had the front page of the *Eye* newspaper that had Premier Harris's photograph on it; perhaps I shouldn't have it. The article really explained that this government did not want to take on the major tobacco companies. Yet I'm going to tell you, in the United States, both Democratic governors and Republican governors and state legislatures and the President have all taken on the tobacco industry, the huge cigarette-making conglomerates, in a huge suit. British Columbia has decided to do it. This government says, "Oh, the feds should do something." They have it within their own power and responsibility to do something and they're afraid of those huge tobacco companies and will not enjoin in that particular suit.

They could obtain from the suit a lot of funding that would go to the health care system, because tobacco has caused some very considerable problems for people in terms of their personal health.

I look at the Ministry of Transportation office in St Catharines. When the announcement to move was made in 1989 or 1990, when Premier Peterson announced that it was moving to St Catharines, there were to be 1,400 jobs as part of that operation. Then the NDP came along. My good friend Gilles Pouliot, Minister of Transportation, was there for the shovel-turning, I believe, or something of that nature. The building was going on and he was there. There was some equipment out there and he had his photograph taken near it. He invited me down to be part of the operation, very nicely. They announced it was down from 1,400 to 1,000 jobs, but people said, "Well, at least there are 1,000 jobs." Now, of course, it's way down. It's about half of those actual jobs at that particular centre. The stimulus we were looking for for downtown St Catharines, which could have been tremendous, was much more modest as a result of this hacking and slashing by the provincial government in that particular office.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the subject of gambling in this province. I remember Ernie Eves and Mike Harris when they were simply members of the opposition, when we didn't have to put the word "honourable" in front of their names, and Mike Harris said: "I don't want anything to do with those gambling revenues. Take them away." Well, since then we've seen nothing but a growth in gambling revenues. "Explosion" is a better word. It boggles the mind. Their goal was to have video lottery terminals, the crack cocaine of gambling, in every bar and every restaurant, in every neighbourhood, in every community, in every town, village and city in Ontario.

There was a hailstorm of objection to that, so they started to scale back a bit and said: "Why don't we have

these so-called charity casinos?" — not the tourist casinos which tend to bring in people from afar, particularly from the United States, the ones in Niagara Falls and Windsor, for instance — "Let's put them in all the communities, put all these slot machines out there." They coerced the local people by saying, "If you don't take them, maybe there won't be money for your charities." Then they had what we call a bribe. I don't mean that in the sense of a violation of the law, but an incentive, shall we call it, to communities that said, "We'll give you \$1,500 a machine for the management of these."

The municipal election came along and a heck of a lot of communities turned them down, because they recognized that these charity casinos essentially aim at the local folk. The catchment area — there's a name they call it, the "feeder area" — is within about 10 miles probably, and then another feeder area within 100 miles. They prey upon the most vulnerable people in our society: the people who are down and out; the people who don't have the good connections to get the best jobs in the province; who may not have had the money to get a good education; who may, for one reason or another, not be in a position to obtain a good job; who may be at the low end of the pay scale. Those people in desperation often turn to their one big chance. Then there are the addicted, a growing portion of the population addicted to gambling who are going into these places.

The government, again under a lot of pressure from the opposition, from the public and I suspect from some of their own members, sounded the bugles of retreat and said: "Oh, no, we're not going to have 44 Mike Harris gambling halls in this province, working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, bleeding money from the local community, money that people would otherwise spend on other services or goods. It's not new money. We won't put any new ones in except in four places" — and there was even some objection in those four places — "and we'll have a municipal plebiscite, a vote, on it."

Let me tell you something: The government is putting the slot machines in through the back door. If you think that many of the racetracks where they're putting in slot machines are not casinos, that's exactly what they are. They'll do anything they can to avoid the term "casino," but they're taking racetracks, where people had jobs, where, had the government maybe taken less of the take, they could still continue to operate, and they're putting in slot machines, and they think that's the salvation of the horse racing industry. It is really a back-door attempt by this government to bleed even more money out of desperate people, out of the most vulnerable, the most addicted people in our society.

If I can think of one thing this government has done that really has long-term effects — and there are a lot of things I may oppose — it's gambling initiatives. I wish they had abandoned them. I would have been the first to applaud in this House and in public if this government had said, "Enough."

I think we have to have a moratorium. I don't think we should have any expansion of gambling. It may be

impractical to go back and remove that which is there now, but I think we should call a moratorium. Enough is enough. No more. I suspect that probably the majority of government members agree with me on that. Governments are becoming addicted to it and it's tearing at the social fabric of our province.

Professor Kindt was here from Illinois this past week. He's no raving left-winger or pious person; he's a professor of law and commerce at the University of Illinois. He analyzes the economic impact. He said: "You know something? They're not a benefit to anybody. All they do is take money that would be spent somewhere else and put it in the pockets of those running the casinos." Remember, a lot of that money is going south of the border, out of this country, not staying in the country, not staying in the community.

I hope the government will reconsider that. I fear that if re-elected, the Harris government will move forward drastically with the expansion of gambling opportunities. That's probably reason in itself for not re-electing this government, though there are plenty of others.

1940

Disabled people in this province were deeply disappointed by a piece of legislation that came in which was essentially window dressing. I talked to many of them. They wanted meaningful consultation, first of all. I am not one who asks questions about, "Will you meet?" because I often think they're not very hard-hitting questions. But all they were looking for this summer was meaningful, public consultation on a bill that would be helpful to this province.

People will say that the bill is better than a kick in the shins, that it's a start, but this government could have been so innovative. It moved so drastically in other areas. It moved so substantially in other areas. The disabled community in our province would have applauded if this government had brought in a meaningful bill which would have significant ramifications for the people of Ontario. Instead, we got essentially window dressing in a bill that was brought forward to deal with their many challenges.

Although I'd like to talk about the urban sprawl problem, about the Niagara Escarpment Commission and how I believe it's being altered drastically to allow development right across the Niagara Escarpment, where there shouldn't be widespread development, I want to simply talk in the last moment about being very wary of getting on the side of the present Premier of Quebec. Keep in mind there's a different agenda there. I'm not meddling in their affairs, but Premier Lucien Bouchard has a different agenda than most people in this country.

I suspect that if you all gang up on the central government, on whoever happens to be in power in the federal government, and try to dismantle it and give the power to the provinces, that won't satisfy Lucien Bouchard. That will just be a step and a further erosion of what we in Ontario consider to be essential national power for our national government, to be able to redistribute, to be able to look at our country as a nation.

I simply say to the government, be very wary about joining hands with Lucien Bouchard when you go into

negotiations over what you call a social union, because essentially we must continue to have in this country a strong central government which will speak for all Canadians, and not just those in one particular part of our country.

Mrs Boyd: I think I should start by coming back to what we're discussing tonight, because those who haven't been in the chamber for the entire course of the member for St Catharines's speech may wonder what we're discussing. What we are discussing is a motion for this House to sit for an extra week, up until December 17, and to sit until 12 midnight all four of those days.

Anyone hearing that would think that the reason we would be doing that would be the pressure of very important, very urgent business that needed to be done, business that could be completed and wind up what is certainly widely touted to be the last time this particular Parliament will meet together in this place. But when we look at what is on the order paper and what there is to discuss, it becomes a little less clear to the average person in Ontario why the government would want to rush things through.

If the government wanted to get second reading done of some of the bills that are there in order to permit committees to meet over the intersession, to permit consultation throughout the province, that would be one thing. But it has been made quite clear to us by the ministers sponsoring bills — I think particularly of the Minister of Community and Social Services, whose bill, the Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Child Welfare Reform), is surely one of the more important pieces of legislation the government has introduced.

The minister tells us that there will be no hearings, that the government wants no hearings on the Child and Family Services Act amendments, even though there are many people in the field of child protection, many people who work hard in their communities to maintain safe communities, who have said to the government, "It's really important that we talk about the changes you have brought in and the implications of those changes."

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, while it certainly to some extent supports the bill, has real concerns about the fact that the government neglected to follow the information of its task force and to add to that bill many elements that are considered essential if the revised Child and Family Services Act is to have the impact people think it should have.

There are a number of small bills that are in front of the Legislature that with the additional time presumably would be able to go through, but there's no sense on our part that the government actually intends to do that, and every sense, at least from the boastful comments of the Premier last week, that other pieces of legislation are still to be introduced that the government wants to have in its hand as it goes to the electorate the next time around.

So we are here debating whether we will stay an extra week and whether we will sit until midnight every night of that week, without having any assurance or any real sense of what it is we will be debating, with what urgency and

with what purpose. If the government is in the decision-making mode about whether or not this Parliament will be called back at all, it begs the question of what it intends to accomplish by pushing bills through second reading when it probably knows very well they will never come before the Legislature again.

It's my own hope, frankly, that we can do some constructive work this week and next week. There are some important issues that need to be discussed. As we hear in letters time after time from our constituents, many people in Ontario feel that the important issues are not the ones that get discussed by this government.

The whip for the government party was very proud to give statistics about how many hours of hearings this government has had compared to the previous Liberal government or the previous NDP government, but the number of hours of hearings masks what those hearings were about. On many occasions, this government has taken bills out to committee that need no discussion, where there is no substantive disagreement among the parties, but the government has decided it is a piece that is safe for them to take out into what has become for them a very hostile atmosphere in many communities.

I'll give you the example of the very hard work that the standing committee on social development did on a bill brought forward by the member for Sudbury. This was an important bill. It was a child protection bill designed to declare that children who engage in prostitution or are forced to engage in prostitution are children in need of protection. The member was proposing measures that could be taken to give that kind of protection to young people who were engaged in prostitution. It really was the kind of bill that people want to talk about. The committee held hearings and talked to large numbers of interested groups that were concerned about this issue and wanted to bring forward some of those concerns.

Then we went through the discussion in committee about amendments to the bill. It wasn't a time-allocated bill so there was a considerable chunk of time left to have some of that discussion. But what became very clear was that all the time that was spent by the committee, by the committee's staff, by all those people who made presentations to that committee, was wasted, because it became very clear as we went through clause-by-clause discussion that the government never had any intention at all of allowing that bill to proceed. Of course, it passed at committee, but the government members, particularly the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services, made it quite clear that although the bill had passed through these forums of discussion, although the bill appeared to be proceeding through the Legislature, that bill was dead in the water and would never be called for third reading.

1950

This is not the first time the government has carried out a charade like this, having hearings, incurring the cost of hearings, incurring the lost hope of hearings, when it has no intention of entertaining any of the amendments that come forward, has no intention of heeding any of the

expert advice that is brought forward by people who come to make presentations to committee, indeed has no intention at all of changing its view of a particular bill.

When we talk about a calendar motion that puts us into what is quite frankly the pressure cooker of a last week in the Legislature, with the prospect of having the Legislature sit till 12 midnight every night, with the House leader for the government party pushing the other parties to make deals to allow what the government absolutely must have before the break, it becomes a bit of a political game. It's not a surprise that people out there in the communities wonder what on earth it is we're doing here, wonder whether or not this whole process works on behalf of the public it is supposed to serve. I think there are times when some of us in here wonder whether that may be true too.

That's not surprising, because this was a government that came in absolutely determined to call into question the democratic process, that had such a strong ideological fix on what it wanted to accomplish that it had no compunction whatsoever about changing the rules of this place, about changing the conventions that had arisen over many years around the discussion in public of issues that come forward, had absolutely no compunction about calling for discussion to end whenever the going gets tough. We see that again and again with the closure motions that the government brings.

Most of us who've been around for a while know that when a government is constantly dependent upon closure motions, is constantly dependent upon using the brute force of its majority to ensure that it gets its own way, it's usually a government in trouble. When the government whip stands up and talks about how many hours of discussion everything has taken compared to other governments, what he doesn't remind people about is that there has never been a government in Ontario whose measures have been so opposed by so many people.

This government does not work to achieve consensus before it brings forward a piece of legislation and it has no intention of achieving consensus once it has introduced legislation. All it's interested in doing is going through the motions. For many of the members in the government party, this is simply a place where you go through the motions of democracy. There's very little passion about what democratic process is all about and why it's important.

When the government whip says that this particular government has had more discussion of its bills than, for example, the Liberal government between 1985 and 1990, most people would shrug and say, "Why would you be surprised?" There has never been a government that has brought forward such a succession of bills that have offended so many people, have trampled on the rights of so many people and in fact have brought the province into a situation where it now has been censured by the United Nations for some of these actions that this government has bulled through.

It is always important when we have a procedural motion like a calendar motion, a motion around the hours

that we spend in this place. We're asked to examine what it is we're doing, what the value of the democratic process is and whether or not the government of the day is being true to the whole purpose of democratic parliamentary government. Quite definitely, there are many people in this province for whom the answer to that question about whether or not this government is respectful about democratic process would be a resounding no.

The government says that people are afraid of change and that's why there's so much opposition to what they're doing. Change is difficult. It is difficult for people to adjust to change and there is a certain inertia at the very least, sometimes resistance to the whole notion of change. Most people who govern understand that and most people who govern try not to impose too rapid or too great a change on the people they govern at any one time.

Of course that's not the method this government takes. This government has bulldozed through this Legislature massive changes in virtually every system of government, in virtually every system of government that affects people in our communities, and does it in a very reprehensible and, I would say, cavalier way.

It is not surprising that people become very cynical and very suspicious of a government that ran its election campaign on the notion that yes, it would make change, but change would not destroy; change would simply supplement what people were used to. But many of the services that we have been so proud of in Ontario, services that grew up under a former Progressive Conservative government, have been decimated by this government, not just by its funding mechanisms, not just by its budget cuts, but by the rules under which it requires those services to be provided.

As is typical of a right-wing government, when this government was running for election, it talked about the perils of big government and it talked about getting power back into the hands of local people. They kept saying it was much more efficient and effective if local decision-making actually guided the policies of the province.

What a turnaround. As soon as they moved from their little ponds, their little municipal ponds, into the bigger pond, the lake of the Ontario Legislature, all of a sudden we see a move to grasp all of the decision-making, all of the power into the hands of the government of the day. Gone is the ability of local school boards to guide the educational process in their own communities. Gone is the ability of local district health councils to make local decisions about the delivery of health care. Gone is the ability of municipalities to try and work out with neighbours whether or not it's going to be more effective for them to join together, whether that's going to provide better government for their communities — gone.

We suddenly see a government that has decided it knows better than any local community. We see the power for education centred in the Mowat Block. We see the power for decision-making around hospital closures and services in the health care area relegated to an unelected, appointed commission. We see the Minister of Municipal Affairs imposing forms of local government on local communities. Just a few examples, and I could go on.

2000

Although the Progressive Conservative Party had always previously talked about the need to ensure that local communities had some decision-making over their own services, it is not surprising, in one sense, to see this government deciding that local communities don't have the ability to make those tough decisions. That, of course, is the kind of language that's used. Why does the Minister of Education say he grabbed all the power around education, around curriculum, around the funding formulas, leaving absolutely no freedom to school boards? Because you can't trust local school boards to make the right decisions.

Time and time again in this place, against very clear, very serious expert advice, this government casts that advice aside and says, "We know better than anybody." I can remember during the Bill 104 controversy, the then Minister of Education kept talking about how his plan was right. It didn't matter what anybody else said. It reminded me — and I reminded him — of the old saying about the mother watching the troops walking by after World War I and saying, "Oh, look, everyone's out of step but my Johnny." Well, that's the way this government behaves. It doesn't matter what experts disagree, it doesn't matter whether the community disagrees, it doesn't matter whether, in a referendum which this government pretends to think is an important vehicle of democracy, local communities disagree; this government believes it knows better than anybody else.

As we come to the end of this particular sitting and we see the government extending its time for a week and its hours to midnight every night, the government can't be surprised that people are apprehensive. The government can't be surprised that people in the province are waiting for yet another shoe to drop. That's the kind of rush that makes them suspicious, and with very good reason.

The government whip went on at some length about how very much the government has consulted. Generally, on issues like the extension of a calendar, the consultation includes a very clear idea of what the other parties can expect to come forward during that time. Very often, calendar motions haven't had to have a lot of debate because the House leaders have sat down and they have a very clear agenda of what needs to be done, and it's possible for people in the other parties to simply agree that they will go along with that. There's a little dickering around an attempt to get some private members' bills passed by the government that might not otherwise be passed but, generally speaking, the issue of working an additional week or working some additional hours is not the issue for opposition parties. They don't have a concern about the amount of time they spend. What they have a concern about is whether that time is well spent and whether the process of democracy is working well. If it simply becomes a pressure-cooker situation in which the government finds itself able to drive through bad public policy, which this government has done on a number of occasions, it isn't a positive outcome.

My colleague from St Catharines used the occasion of this motion to talk about some of the bad public policy and the effects of bad public policy in his own community. I understand why he thinks that's relevant to this discussion, because part of our job here, part of the reason we are here, is to bring to this place some clear information about how changes in public policy affect our community. Part of the debate here is supposed to be for us to be the speakers, to give voice to the concerns that our local communities have. Many of the issues that the member for St Catharines raised are issues that are of concern in every single community throughout the province.

He talked very briefly about property taxes. I was surprised he was so brief about property taxes, because one of the reasons this government needs to extend the time is that it has taken seven tries to get the property tax right, and as we know in our communities, it still isn't right. They still won't listen to the experts, the professionals who work in the field, who could give them the assistance they need to get it right. They have refused to listen to the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. They have refused to take the kind of advice that is needed when you are looking at such massive downloading on to municipalities and trying to get the balance right.

When we look at the property tax issue, how many times have we been here discussing how to fix the mistake in the last bill? That takes a lot of time. Whereas if the government had thought the issue through, taken advice from those who actually know how the system works, and worked it through in consultation, they probably could have done this huge, massive change with virtually no conflict and with no mistakes. Instead of that, we're constantly back here with yet another bill, trying to correct the mistake they rushed into making the last time.

Certainly, those of us who are in contact with our municipal colleagues know there's no confidence on the municipal side that this is going to work now. There's no confidence that this particular measure that is in front of us now in Bill 79 is actually going to be better. In fact, in my community there's some real evidence that this enforced phasing-in is going to make things worse, because in our community different choices were made under other bills over the last year that have put into place a system that disadvantages small business under Bill 79. Obviously, our municipal counterparts are terribly concerned about this and are saying it's because this government goes at everything with such a focus on what they think is right, doesn't listen to advice, thinks that every community is the same and that the cookie cutter they apply is going to work properly all over the province. But it doesn't.

When we're talking about being here for extra time, there's a part of us that wants to say, "If you had been able to do this properly, if you had done the consultation, if you had worked with the experts, if we had had to deal with only one property tax bill, you would have had time for six other bills and we wouldn't have to be here talking about an extension of this time."

The mythology about the ability of right-wing governments to manage so much better than anybody else is just exactly that. We have seen this government stumble from one mistake to another. We've seen them destroy the family support plan and take months and months to get it back up and running. Even though the government members won't admit it, they see the horror stories as much as we do. They know it isn't working even now. Although they are gathering more money every month, which is the defence the Attorney General uses all the time — of course they are, because about 1,200 families come on to the plan every month and at least 25% of those are paying some money, so of course there's more money every month. But there are also more and more families that are not getting the support they need because the government is not prepared to put the right resources in to make the plan work.

2010

The auditor was very clear that that's the problem in service after service. The government blithely — we hear at one point it's 13,000 people and then we hear it's 15,000 people and then we hear it's 16,000 people — let these people go, these people who had the expertise in delivering community services, and in many cases privatized the jobs that they did, and then can't understand why the system isn't working. It's a terrible travesty. We see the government now saying, "There are another 16,000 civil servants we plan to let go."

I think it's very clearly time for people in Ontario to say: "This isn't about better services to people. This is about spreading around the kinds of dollars that used to go to civil servants, who were committed and dedicated to their jobs, to their private sector friends."

When the auditor talked about Andersen Consulting and we heard that the consultants at Andersen were making more in one hour than a single person gets on welfare for an entire month, it became very clear what was going on. This is a blatant shift of resources from those who can least afford it to those who can most afford it, and it's happening in every area.

Let the civil servants go. Push them out the door, force them on to an employment insurance plan which is paying people less and less because of the cuts the federal Liberals are making in employment insurance, on to a plan where there's no retraining available for those people. Push them out the door and then put even more dollars into paying consultants the kinds of consulting fees that people are getting from the government. The number of consultations that are being had, the frankly useless plans that many of those consultants come back with that are of absolutely no use to the government, even it wouldn't touch some of those plans, is all a movement of dollars from secure salaries for families living in communities, enabling people to support their communities, to pay taxes, to put their children through school, to pay their mortgages, all of it flowing to consultants, many of them like Andersen Consulting with an American base or American ties, dollars flowing directly out of Ontario.

When we talk about spending more time here with more bills coming forward, there's a kind of feeling on the

part of certainly many of my constituents that they would like the opposition parties not to agree to this, to try and make sure that it's not possible for the government to have more time, because they're very fearful of what the government might do.

You know, the press was convinced that the general public wasn't very interested in the rules that govern this place, and they're right. There's nothing more dry than talking about parliamentary procedure and there's nothing harder for people to grasp, if they don't spend a lot of time here, than the rules that govern debate. But the people of Ontario are beginning to understand that government can force through measures over their objections much more quickly now, that it takes very little time for this government to get through the most repugnant legislation, and there is no obligation on the government to consult with the general public or to even give the general public an opportunity to know what's happening.

When we look at the kind of legislation that could be introduced sometime this week and thrust through by the end of next week with no consultation, with no ability on the part of people in our communities to understand what's going on, then you have to understand where the resistance comes from. This is not a minor little request to have an extra week, an extra four days and an extra four days to 12 pm. It's a possibility for you to ram through another raft of repugnant legislation. People understand that. You thought they wouldn't but they do.

It's interesting that we in the opposition parties are painted as being obstructive. I keep reminding the government that that's our job. You did not win the majority of votes in this province. You won the majority of seats but you didn't win the majority of votes. There's a huge proportion of people out there who do not agree with your policies and it's our job to give those objections voice here.

From the very beginning of this Legislature there are people, particularly backbenchers, in the government party who have tried to suggest that any kind of a debate is simply obstructiveness. Part of that is because they never listen to the facts, they don't want to be confused by the facts of the debate, and they certainly don't want to be put off message because they know that their success within their caucus depends on their ability to manage to keep that message, not to be put off that message, to really march to the tune that comes out of the corner office.

Debate becomes a painful thing because people in the opposition parties raise issues that are dangerous to the overall propaganda message the government is trying to put out. When the government wants to be able to just keep repeating its messages through all its \$47 million worth of advertising, most of it paid for by us, the taxpayer, repeat the message, repeat the message, it's kind of like the book *Nineteen Eighty-four* — it's actually a little bit more like 1954 most of the time around here, but the book *Nineteen Eighty-four* — where if you keep on forcing people to doublespeak, to doublethink, they lose track of the real story. That's what is happening here. Ministers get up and they read from their paper, "This is

what I must do." They don't dare to deviate from that or they may find themselves out of their seats.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): They're not allowed to question.

Mrs Boyd: Not allowed to question what goes on, just allowed to carry the message like little messengers. That's not our job. I don't think it's yours either, incidentally, but it certainly isn't our job.

Our job in the opposition is to question very thoroughly what the motive of the government is in making a change, what the motive of the government is in bringing forward a motion, what the issues are inherent in a supposedly benign piece of legislation, finding out what devil is in the detail. That's our job.

What one does in a Parliament is to discuss, to debate, and always in Ontario before to try and come at least to some compromise most of the time, to come to some kind of consensus where people could be comfortable that this is a progressive move that's being made, even if they fundamentally disagree with some of the elements. We've lost that in this Legislature. That's what has been lost under this government.

It's interesting, the government whip was trying to suggest that we would object to having four more days in the Legislature. Believe me, four more days of question period is a dream to us. We love that. We love to be able to call the ministers to account. It's very important for that process to go on, so we don't object to the calendar motion from that point of view.

2020

I will object, and I'm sure most of my colleagues on this side of the House will object, and in their hearts if not through their mouths many of the government members will object, if these extra days are spent pushing through a piece of legislation like the so-called ODA legislation, Bill 83, the betrayal bill that the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation has brought forward.

One of the most disgusting things I have ever seen in my life is that minister trying to defend this indefensible piece of legislation. It's not worth the paper it's written on. It does not need legislation to accomplish it. In fact it was the policy of a government for five years to do everything that is in that piece of legislation, and the minute the Tories came into this place, it was set aside and there were no more programs to deal with the disabled, because this government didn't think it was important.

Now we find that as they come towards the end of their term of government the order from the corner office is: "Get something in there. Call it the ODA, and try and fool people into believing a promise made is a promise kept." It isn't going to wash. It is the height of cynicism to bring forward this piece of legislation.

Mr Gerretsen: I don't think it's the minister; I think it's the government.

Mrs Boyd: The minister in a responsible government, whether she likes to do it or not, is responsible. One of the things that's very interesting about this government is there seems to be an assumption on the part of some ministers that if they in their hearts don't like something

that's done, they somehow are not responsible. In a responsible government every member of the cabinet is responsible for every decision of the cabinet, whether they like it or not. It is quite bizarre to hear some ministers go back to their home communities and try and pretend that somehow they're not just as implicated as every other cabinet minister in every piece of legislation that passes through the whole legislative process here in the Legislature.

It's not the same for backbenchers. Backbenchers are not the government. They're part of the government caucus, but they're not the government, so one can allow the backbench a little bit more leeway, although we don't see too much of that leeway too often, and the sword falls rather swiftly on those who get out of line. What we need to be dealing with when we deal with bad legislation is people who have the integrity and the courage to say, "No, I won't have my name connected to such a cynical piece of work."

So I'll be very upset, and I'm sure there will be people all over this province who will be very upset, if this extra time we're to spend in here over the next week is spent with the government attempting to foist that non-piece of legislation, Bill 83, down the throats of Ontarians, so that they can call it "a promise made, a promise kept."

From our perspective, it's a great opportunity to point out the cynicism of this government, but it is so indefensible to raise the hopes of people who are disabled, to promise them in your own discussion paper that you are going to move to actually make their world more accessible. To come up with this piece of trivial nonsense is absolutely disgraceful. If the government thinks for a minute that we are going to stop talking about how disgraceful this Bill 83 is, they've got another think coming. At every chance we will point out the terrible cynicism and the political opportunism that is being displayed here.

Another bill, about which we wonder whether it is going to come forward just for second reading, is the Child and Family Services Act. We know the minister doesn't want it to go out to hearings, but it's very important that it go out for hearings. It is an example of how the government has selected a certain number of people to talk to about a very important piece of legislation, without the benefit of having the discussions public. They have that select group come forward with a task force report and then move forward, after cherry-picking a few pieces out of that task force report, with a bill that purports to amend the Child and Family Services Act.

Here we are again with a situation where there has been very little public discussion about the implications of that act, and we hear the minister saying day after day, "We're not going to go out to public hearings on that act; we've already consulted."

Again and again this government talks about consulting when what they do is hand-pick people, usually Tory hacks, to sit in on a committee and repeat back to them what they want to hear. Where that doesn't happen, where people refuse to participate, as the member for High Park

can tell you the disabled refuse to participate in that kind of charade, then we see the travesty of a Bill 83 result. What we have a subversion of the whole process of government, when a government like this government decides it is going to get its own way come hell or high water, with no regard to what the people of Ontario say.

When we look at what can be accomplished in the amount of time we're talking about, we're talking about not four days, but because this government has decreed you can have two days in one day, we're talking about eight sessional days, and in eight sessional days a great deal more damage can be done.

I think the government is hoping that people are so concerned about getting ready for the holidays, and is hoping that people have so been enjoying the balmy weather that may finally be turning into winter but has not been winter up to this point, in southern Ontario anyway, and not a typical winter even in the north, that people are kind of sleepwalking through this period of time.

I would say to the people who are watching at home, don't be fooled. We're talking about eight sessional days packed into one week in which this government, with the rules it has changed, can thrust through this Legislature pieces of legislation that may not even have been introduced at this point. Don't get so wound up in your Christmas cards and gift shopping and plans for going away and all the seasonal fun that happens; keep an eye on what's going on here, because we find it ominous — not omnibus, Mr Speaker, but ominous — that the government wants to extend this period of time without having a definite agenda that they say they need.

I'd be happy to go on for the rest of the hour that I have to speak, which is about another 14 minutes, but I want to give an opportunity for others to speak to this very important issue. So I'm going to close with one warning for the government.

Very often as you go to an election it's tempting to try and clean up the loose ends, to try and thrust into the last few days all of the things that you think you've got to have in order to say you kept your promises. We have seen so much haste and so much waste of time in this place, so much waste of energy on the part of people who really care across the province, and so many serious mistakes in legislation, that all I can say to the government is you will not go to the electorate making a very good impression if you blow it because you're trying to get all your ducks in line by thrusting and pushing and bullying things through this Legislature. I really hope you will heed that advice, because I can tell you, last impressions are very important with the electorate. It's important for you all to be very aware that if you continue to show a disregard for democratic process, if you continue to show that "My way or the highway" is your motto, you will find that you will not make a good impression on the electorate as we move towards an election.

2030

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm glad to have an opportunity to speak on the notice of motion this evening as well, the calendar motion for us to have

sessions until midnight next week. Like most members of the House, most members of the opposition are very glad to have an opportunity to have more time in the Legislature to discuss the legislation before us and, perhaps just as important, to have an opportunity to debate here the issues that we feel simply don't receive enough debate, the issues that need to be brought forward on a daily basis, hopefully until this government recognizes that they cannot continue to carry on in the fashion they have and ignore some of the realities in the province.

As a member from the north, from Thunder Bay, from the riding of Port Arthur, I could spend more than the time I'm allotted discussing some of the concerns we have up in our part of the province that are directly a result of either this government's actions or, frequently, inaction. One looks at legislation that has gone in the past, back to three years ago, Bill 26, the massive omnibus bill, where we had an extraordinary event in this Legislature which I'm sure you recall, Speaker, and I know many members of the Legislature do. We literally were forced to sit overnight. The member from Scarborough, Alvin Curling, became quite a hero at that time for staying here and fighting until we got a guarantee that we would have hearings on a piece of legislation —

Applause.

Mr Gravelle: Yes, indeed; thank you — that has had an extraordinary impact on this province since that time, an extraordinary impact because one of the things that came out of Bill 26 was the Health Services Restructuring Commission. Being a resident of Thunder Bay and the member representing Port Arthur, I know that the Health Services Restructuring Commission came into Thunder Bay first and made a number of decisions that we have been fighting ever since. It has had an impact on health care delivery in our province in a dramatic and pretty frightening way. I wouldn't mind using part of my time tonight to try to speak to some of the areas that I think are still incredibly inadequate, that we need to have changed and that this government needs to understand are as a result of that legislation.

Next week we'll be discussing other legislation as well, having an opportunity to debate various other bills. We look forward to that eagerly. But it's important that we understand that there are many things happening on a daily basis that are hurting people in a dramatic fashion. If one looks at the situation in terms of my riding, in terms of northwestern Ontario, we know that the number of acute care beds in our hospital system have been cut drastically. We know that as a result of those cutbacks, we have a constant situation where people going to our hospitals for a variety of services and need an acute care bed but cannot get those beds. The reason is because the restructuring commission has put extraordinarily tight and restrictive time lines on our system.

We also know this government took \$800 million out of the hospitals themselves while this was going on. They were doing cutbacks and pulling money out of the system at the same time as they were restructuring the system. This continues to go on, and we're seeing the results of that in a dramatic fashion.

I have a constituent who recently had an extraordinary experience where his wife became very ill. He called the ambulance to take her to one of the two sites presently in Thunder Bay, and the ambulance service was not able to take her to the site where her doctor had said to take her. They were not able to do so. Because of the cutbacks, that emergency service was not in place. It was an extraordinary situation, where he had to get her there. He found a way to get his wife to the hospital. The ambulance attendants were put in a position of saying, "We can't take her there, but we can follow you there and we can help you take her out of the car and bring her into the hospital if there's a doctor waiting for you, but we aren't allowed to do so." Stories like that were absolutely unheard-of in the past, and now that's the kind of health care we're being forced to live with. This is unacceptable.

We know that the situation in terms of long-term care is extremely alarming. We had the minister making an announcement some time ago about a significant amount of money being spent on long-term-care beds. In terms of the allotment for northwestern Ontario and the Thunder Bay district area, we're talking about 192 more long-term beds. The problem with that is that the waiting list for long-term-care beds as we speak, right now, is about 350 to 400. So over the next eight years there will be a commitment to 192 more long-term-care beds, but unfortunately the waiting list right now is so massive we're not going to ever be able to catch up to it.

We have seen the formation of the community care access centres, one-stop shopping installed, in essence, in terms of home care, in terms of the right kind of care for people who have to leave the hospital. We know people are leaving the hospital sicker; we know they're leaving quicker. As a result, pressure is being put on the community care access centres to provide care that they really shouldn't frequently be trying to provide. The people should still be in the hospital. As a result, the pressures on this particular agency are enormous. The people trying to run this organization are under extraordinary pressures, because they also aren't receiving the level of funding they need.

There are some pretty interesting and important statistics about the community care access centre in Thunder Bay district. I think it's important that members of the Legislature hear this. The fact is that the district land mass of the CCAC in the district of Thunder Bay is larger than any other CCAC in the province. It's an important fact to know that the over-65 age group is higher than the provincial average. These are all statistics; these are all facts. The truth also is that the prevalence of disease and the rate are higher than the provincial average. For example, circulatory diseases are 26% higher than the provincial norm; injuries are 32% higher than the provincial norm; in northwestern Ontario, in the district of Thunder Bay, the incidence of diabetes is third-highest in the world, and all causes of death for the district of Thunder Bay are 12% higher than the provincial norm. Hospital utilization is 55% higher than the provincial average, a factor that the restructuring commission did not take into consideration

when it was making its decisions and directives, and something that we continue to fight.

Health care restructuring has driven the caseloads for the CCACs upwards. In the first quarter of 1998-99, the acute client caseload has increased by 21%; and the acute care program service utilization has increased, in terms of nursing 34%, homemaking 110% and 72% in other important areas. The fact is we cannot get that message across to the minister, and it's one we have to continue to push.

I appreciate the opportunity for us to be here next week until midnight every night to try to make these points. The fact is, my part of the province is not treated fairly and not treated in the same manner as is the rest of the province. We learned last week, for example, that, other than hospital-based physiotherapy services, there will be no such opportunity in northern Ontario as of April 1, when they eliminate the G code listing, delist OHIP from this.

In the rest of the province there are what are called schedule 5 clinics. I'm sure you're familiar with them. Under the schedule 5 clinics, those services will continue after April 1 and be direct-billed to OHIP. In northwestern Ontario, in entirely all of northern Ontario, that is not possible. The minister says she's reviewing it and I appreciate that. The fact is, it's a problem that needs to be solved. It's of great concern to all the people who need care: to the seniors, to people on social assistance, to all those who need physiotherapy care. It's totally unacceptable to imagine that it's all right for this part of the province, as of a certain time period, not to have that kind of care outside of hospital-based care. The important point about that, of course, is that the waiting lists for hospital-based care, as they stand now, are very long and only the high-needs or high-priority clients are getting that care at this time. One can't imagine what will happen when you realize that at this stage only 15% of the clients are being served out of hospital-based care.

2040

These are the issues that concern me as a representative of the people trying to get that point across. We have so many other examples. We've been trying to get an eating disorders clinic set up at St Joe's care group in Thunder Bay. It's an important service, one that's provided in other parts of the province. We've lobbied the minister very hard on it and cannot get the appropriate funding for that. The whole issue of eating disorders is one that is extremely important, that we need to support and that has funding in other larger centres. It's extraordinary to me that I should be standing here in essence begging for it, but I suppose I am. We should not be doing so. That care should be there, and the minister should be supporting it.

We know there are some real problems in terms of children's mental health. Last week my colleague Lyn McLeod, the member for Fort William, and I met with the Lakehead Regional Family Centre, an extraordinary group that has been working out of Thunder Bay for about 10 years now. They are an accredited children's mental health centre that provides assessment, treatment, counselling and support services to children, adolescents and

their families. It is funded through the government, and it is legislated under the Child and Family Services Act. They came to us, as I think they had come to their ministry officials, and said, "We think we're doing a pretty good job, we're working hard, but our caseload has doubled." Even with the caseload doubling, they know and we know that the vast number of children with mental health problems who need some counselling, need some help, are not being reached.

We're living now in a society where agencies such as the Lakehead Regional Family Centre are under extreme pressure financially as their funding gets cut, as it has been cut in the last five years. Because they're doing a good job, their caseload increases, and because the need has increased; and because of this government's policies, the need has increased. There is no question that the jump in cases happened quite significantly after the 21.6% cut to social assistance.

The government can't have it both ways. They can't say, "We're trying to provide better care," when we know that children's mental health is not a mandated service regardless; it comes under the Ministry of Community and Social Services. But we know that government decisions have created increased problems and stresses for families who are living below the poverty line.

So here's an agency that wants to provide the care, is living with quite extraordinary financial constraints, has a caseload that has doubled, has a waiting list right now of somewhere in the area of 300. That's a very sad story all by itself. Children have gone to the agency and need the help, and the agency is desperate to give them the help, meets with them, but because of the situation they're in, they don't have the staffing they need, because they've had to cut some staff as well, to look after these children who need some counselling, who have some problems and can be helped by the system. In fact, the success rate of the Lakehead Regional Family Centre is extraordinary.

We also know, for example, that the restructuring commission announced there was going to be a 12-bed adolescent treatment centre put into the Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital. We've seen nothing of that. It's an important service. At the time, it was agreed it was needed. We have not seen it. The minister reannounced it when she was up in Thunder Bay to announce that indeed the community's battle to get a new hospital had been won.

There's another issue. Here we've got the Premier and the minister convinced that indeed a new hospital is an appropriate decision for Thunder Bay. Having said that, they won't fund it at the same level that they'll fund everything else they've decided to build in the province. Everywhere else in the province, when the restructuring commission comes in, despite all the concern and arguments out there, when a final decision comes down about what capital project is going forward, the province will fund 70% of that. In the case of Thunder Bay, we have a situation where they will fund 56% only. They will not recognize that the cost of the retrofitted general hospital was much higher than they would have believed it was.

Even if they used those figures of what the retrofitted general hospital would have cost to build — it would have been very close to the cost that was calculated of the new hospital — they should be funding us to 70% of that funding, and they're not.

This is a battle that we've got to carry on. There is a great deal of concern in Thunder Bay and indeed the entire area about the costs of the new hospital and how we are going to raise that. The fact is that the Premier and the Minister of Health gladly came into Thunder Bay to say they were pleased to be able to award us a new hospital, but they're not prepared to provide us with the funding that everybody else gets in the rest of the province. That's an issue I have brought up before and brought up in the Legislature, and I will bring it up again. There are just so many areas of concern.

Back, if I may, to the Lakehead Regional Family Centre. The fact is that the province can help. If they can provide a very small amount of money, the agency will at least be able to hire people on a contract basis, on a short-term basis, to eliminate that waiting list. It is our responsibility as legislators to try to hold the government's feet to the fire when they say they really want to take care of the people who need help. If we've got the solution to it, we need to try to persuade the government to do that. This is an extraordinarily important agency. It provides a service that's very much needed, and nobody is going to argue with that. If we can get the government to provide us with some support — I hope that will be coming forward — we can perhaps deal with the waiting list, and then we can start dealing with the longer-term problems. Either we believe that this is a service that must be provided or we don't. I think it's the responsibility of this government to listen to that.

Again, having the opportunity to discuss and debate those kinds of issues next week, as the motion states, is an opportunity that we all look forward to, as I enjoyed very much the opportunity to stand here tonight to talk about some of the issues that mean a great deal to me and a great deal to the constituents I represent and indeed to all the people in northwestern Ontario, because we do find ourselves fighting battles all the time that we don't think we should be having to fight. You shouldn't be arguing about trying to get the same service and having the same service level as the rest of the province. In many ways, that is rather an absurd kind of a debate to have, but here we are doing it, and it's something we'll continue to do.

Mr Gerretsen: They just don't listen.

Mr Gravelle: They don't listen. We have to continue to fight to get our point across.

There are so many other elements of the legislation that have come before us. Look at Bill 79. This legislation is turning into a true embarrassment for this government. It's astonishing. This is, what, the eighth piece of legislation related to this aspect? This one may be the worst. This is the one that has people most upset. I am quite convinced that the government, if they could, would like to get out of this. Here you've got the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treas-

urers of Ontario, the Municipal Finance Officers Association of Ontario, the Association of Municipal Tax Collectors of Ontario, all of them, saying: "Stop it. Stop this bill. Stop it while you can."

Mr David Caplan (Orlione): Stop the madness.

Mr Gravelle: Stop the madness is right. It's quite extraordinary. The member for Nepean is laughing, and I'm surprised to see that he is, because I'm sure that the municipalities surrounding him are also very upset about this situation they've been put into. It's not funny.

I received a letter today from one of the municipalities I represent, the township of Shuniah. They are desperate to have Bill 79 dropped. They're absolutely stunned by it.

Interjection.

Mr Gravelle: No matter which member over there is choosing to heckle me, I'm sure they're hearing from their own municipalities. Maybe the truth hurts. This is a piece of legislation that is just turning into a disaster.

The township of Dorion wrote a letter. They are desperate: "...for your immediate action. We would appreciate your assistance in this urgent matter."

They are all totally desperate in terms of what their jobs have to be, and this government is not allowing them to do their own jobs. It's really quite astonishing. We have to talk about that, so to have the opportunity to talk about an issue such as that next week is an opportunity we are all grateful to have.

2050

There are a number of issues that go on and on. We've all talked a great deal about the absolute mess in the education system. We are all very disappointed in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act that the minister put forward a couple of weeks ago. I'm hearing from many of the groups I represent who feel very strongly that unless there is some kind of enforcement, unless there is some clear way of making this act have meaning, it is an insult to them and one they are incredibly upset about. I spoke to a group last night at the 40th anniversary of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and they're upset. They said, "If it isn't going to be enforced, can there at least be some real accountability?" I will look forward to speaking on that when that legislation comes forward.

My time has, unbelievably rapidly, come to an end. I can't believe how quickly 20 minutes goes by. I'm sure you're all disappointed that my time is up. I'm glad to have had an opportunity to express some of my concerns. They're all serious concerns and ones that I intend to continue to fight.

Mr Pouliot: Non seulement bonne soirée, mais bonne soirée avancée et aussi bonne fin de soirée.

If I can share a sentiment with you while I have your attention, Speaker, if you were to ask me, "As the member for Lake Nipigon, is there any other place you would rather be at 10 minutes to 9 on this Monday night?" I'd have to say, yes, there are other places I would rather be, and I will tell you why.

There is absolutely, totally no need to be here. I see some of the members opposite writing Christmas cards, paid for by the taxpayers, as opposed to being focused on

the subject matter being addressed in front of their very eyes. They should be in their offices. I would rather be picking up the phone, listening to what the people of Lake Nipigon have to say, as opposed to being here. Why? There's no reason for being here, because the government, this session especially, has presented us with an agenda of absolute incompetence.

We've had a bill that affects everyone in Ontario, property taxation. It came in front of the House and then it went back. It's like a turnstile. It came back seven times, simply because they couldn't get it right. Every time it came back to the House, albeit under a slightly different title, it was to correct the bill before it.

No wonder we're here at 9 o'clock and we shall be here till midnight. The majority muscle, the absolute enforcement sitting opposite, has decreed not only this week but this motion says that on December 14, 15, 16 and 17 we will be here debating the mess left by the government. Of the 17 bills they've presented this session — Speaker, you are a student of procedure. I've watched you closely and I admire you. You're a stickler for definition and for rules. That's your job. I'm somewhat envious of your capacity to absorb, to assimilate all the details in the standing orders. But what we have here is that only seven of those 17 bills have reached second reading — they just cannot get it right — so they need House time.

I wouldn't mind being here 24 hours a day, energy permitting. This is very close to Christmas Eve. If we were to debate the real issues, for instance the growing gap between the haves and the have-nots, then I would feel most comfortable. I would say: "Maybe the message will begin to penetrate. Maybe the reality will get across so they can avail themselves of an opportunity best afforded to majority governments to ease the pain."

I know some of the members of the government benefit by that growing gap. They benefit personally. Their friends, the members they associate with, also benefit. Those are the people they court. What I have some difficulty understanding is the members of the back bench. Some of them are privileged on account of being younger, yet sometimes I wonder if youth is not wasted on those young people. I see them so much believe in this gap, and they themselves are not as fortunate as others of their colleagues. They sort of coattail — they like to hang around — and they have this dream that maybe one day they will enjoy the same richness as those people who have already arrived.

As someone from Texas would say, "Big hat, no cattle." They're only there as observers. They can't walk the walk, but there's a pretence. They try. You will see them in the corridor. They've tried to acquire that distinctive walk that the most fortunate present us with. They try to have the same allure, the same pizzazz, the same poise of presentation. They truly portray the confidence of ignorance in some cases, if I may be so bold.

Let's cut to the chase. Let's get to the facts.

The report by the Centre for Social Justice, a report funded by the Atkinson foundation, shows that the richest 10% of Canadians — this is the Christmas season for all of us — make 314 times more than the poorest. Eighteen years ago, the richest made one tenth of that, maybe 25 or 30 times more. Get the meaning, get what I'm saying? They make 314 times more, and the government puts some of those people — and I have nothing against them; I want to wish them well in fact, but a little more equality, to give everyone a relative chance to dream — on a pedestal. They become the heroes, the shakers and movers, the job creators.

Yet economists paint a different picture. They tell you that our wealth is based on consumption, on the ability of people to bridge the gap. It makes the rich more responsible, it makes the poor aspire to the middle class, and it makes the middle class more prosperous and more stabilized. But we're going in a different direction.

From 1995 to 1996, a period of one year, the poorest 10% of Canadian families with children under 18 saw their average after-tax income drop from \$15,208 to \$13,453. You've heard about the tax scheme, the reduction in Ontario personal income tax. The 10% among the rich, the richest, got a \$15,000 tax break with the full implementation of the 30% tax rebate — that's \$15,000 in disposable income, money in the jeans, money in the pocket — and the poorest got \$150 per annum. Imagine, \$150 per annum, but the BMW and other imported luxury cars crowd gets \$15,000. They're the people who need it the least, so we're providing incentives for the people who don't need incentives.

You've heard the trumpet, you've heard the fanfare, the publicity about the 400,000 jobs — not jobs that the government has created but that the global economic climate has created. The majority are self-employed, and the majority of those self-employed jobs pay less than \$10,000 per annum. What you achieve in numbers does not correspond to what the marketplace sees as a prosperous time.

2100

In 1973, 60% of families with children under 18 earned between \$24,500 and \$65,000. We're talking about 1996 dollars. By 1996, that middle class had shrunk, since only 44% of families with dependent children made \$24,500 to \$65,000. We've gone from 60% of people that you could classify as middle class to only 44%. That's an awful lot of people. That's an awful lot of money that's not reaching the marketplace. That's an awful lot of dreams, hopes that are not given a chance to materialize. There are far too many people who will not be like some others, and in reality, that's all they're asking for. That's a 26% difference. 26% fewer members of the middle class.

You can ask what happened to them. Did they get rich? No. Some 80% of that 26% gravitated downwards — that's four out of five of that 26% — and only one fifth, 20% of the dislocated, got a little better, on the fringe of, for them, unprecedented wealth. They're not wealthy, but they've done a little better, but only one out of five.

The basic findings and conclusions: These are some of the report's proposed solutions. If you are well intentioned, if you are a citizen, if you are concerned about the welfare of your community and your fellow people in it, most of it makes immense common sense, is most commonsensical: better distribution of working time; high-quality, low-cost education and child care. We read on the front page of today's Toronto Star, the largest daily-circulation newspaper in the country, that 1,500 day care spaces in greater Toronto will cease to exist. They will vanish, they will disappear, so 1,500 children will no longer have access to day care, which is contrary to the report's recommendations.

Employment equity legislation: We're talking here about gender. We're talking here about the right for everyone who has an opportunity to work in Ontario to be recognized and encouraged to the same degree.

Support unions: It's the right of people to organize if they wish — that's a long-standing right — but in Ontario at present, the government is most uncomfortable with the labour movement. Mind you, if you belong to an association of professionals, if you belong to the doctors' union, then it's OK. Those are the most powerful, and they can deal with that. They understand the most powerful; they are among the most powerful. I must say about doctors that they do present us with an essential service. We need them from cradle to grave, and we appreciate what they're doing. I can't say that about the government, that we appreciate them in the same fashion, to the same extent.

Raise the minimum wage: When some people from the government say we should cut the minimum wage or we should freeze it forever because it makes us less competitive, that the minimum wage is a burden, if 40 hours at your designated workplace at \$5.85 an hour minus taxes is too high, I say to them, you ought to try living on it.

Interjection.

Mr Pouliot: Absolutely. You just can't do it, as my colleague from Nickel Belt says so well. You cannot do it. You need a second job, and that puts you past the 40 hours, and sometimes a third tenure, just to make ends meet, just to round out the month. The report says to raise the minimum wage. Give people a living wage.

Restore income support: We've talked a great deal about that. It speaks for itself. We need a helping hand, not the back of the hand.

More affordable housing: the right to shelter, the aspiration to have secure and comfortable shelter, a roof over your head. They shouldn't even have to write this. It should be happening, taken for granted. We shouldn't even have to be reminded.

Expand universal health provisions; improve access to higher education; enhance parks, libraries and community services.

Undo the tax system bias towards the wealthy: A lot of our ills are associated with the unfair allocation of the tax system. Governments, successive governments, have attempted to a limited extent to make the tax system more progressive, yet on the other hand, the loopholes, the

opportunities not to pay taxes, have been rampant. I was reading an article over the weekend, part of my weekend must reading, about one Ross Perot, a very wealthy person, a former presidential candidate in the United States, who prides himself in year after year consistently paying less than 10% of the declared net income.

It's the world upside down, because Harry and Jane Smith at the factory down the street don't have the same opportunity; they're docked at the source and they pay and they pay again. They don't mind paying a few extra dollars — when I listen to them, that's what they tell me — for those who have less, for those who are under duress because of circumstances, be they temporary or permanent, but they mind paying a few dollars more to subsidize those who need it least.

The 10 richest, best-paid CEOs last year made \$10 million each. If you go to Bombardier, M. Gratton — and I don't begrudge it him; go to it, Robert — it's \$28 million. Since a lot of it is deferred, since a lot of it comes under provisions or options exercised, the likelihood is that those people pay a smaller percentage of income tax than someone working on the assembly line at General Motors, Chrysler or Ford who works 40 to 60 hours a year of overtime. Their level of taxation, on a percentage basis, is higher than any one of the 10 best-paid CEOs, and they've increased their lot in one year — sure, it was a good year — by 56% because of stock options, because of salaries, because of a tie-up with performance. What I'm saying is that there's a grave danger that if this casino, if this winner-take-all philosophy is perpetuated, the power of compounding will bring us to social upheaval.

2110

Do not deprive them, do not stop incentives and encouragement and individual drive. But by the same token, what we're seeking here is some equality. I would have loved to debate these real human dimension issues an awful lot more than to say, "We messed things up," "No, we didn't," "Blame everybody, but we will keep you here until midnight."

Out of this House there are a lot of people we have to listen to, and the New Democrats will do so. We believe we have the right approach. We believe we've reached equilibrium and we have a good understanding of what is taking place, not only for the rich but for all of us in Ontario.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): Since the rotation has gone around a couple of times and it would appear it's going to go around a couple of more times, we may as well jump into the fray here and make a few comments.

It's interesting to listen to the member for Nipigon, a member of the last government of this province, the NDP government, offer some comments on a motion to extend House sittings, which basically involves us working a little longer and a little harder on behalf of the taxpayers of the province of Ontario. It was interesting to hear comments from the member for Nipigon, who was part of that famous government that virtually abandoned the people of the province during the last part of their

particular reign of terror. It's interesting that he would offer some comments tonight.

What we're talking about here is working a little harder on behalf of the taxpayers. With the indulgence of the members opposite, I'd like to refresh their memories about a few of the things that have happened in the province in the last little while.

I think one of the first things we should remind ourselves of is the 357,000 fewer people who are trapped in the welfare system. Of those 357,000, there are 138,000 children who are no longer dependent on welfare because their parents in many cases have found some sort of gainful employment.

When we took over this province as the government in 1995, one out of every eight people in the province of Ontario was trapped on welfare. In what is arguably the richest part of the world, we had a system where one out of every eight people was trapped on welfare. We have been very successful since in reducing that number by 357,000 people.

We've done that because the private sector in our province has created 440,000 new jobs. They've created those new jobs in large part because of the environment that's been established because of the actions of the Mike Harris government: 66 reductions in taxes that have left people with much more money in their pockets. They can use that money to spend. In spending that money, they generate activity in the economy. That extra activity of course produces new jobs, and as a result we have 440,000 new private sector jobs created in Ontario since 1995. We now have 6.9% unemployment in Ontario, compared to 8.7% in the country.

Our friends in Ottawa will talk about this wonderful surplus that they've created and take the credit for it. For anyone who understands how the country works, they will know that the success that Ottawa has enjoyed, that Mr Martin has enjoyed, is totally the result of the economic activity that has been generated in Ontario thanks in large part to the policies of the Mike Harris government.

But now we have our federal friends, who have taken \$19 billion in excess UI premiums, confiscated that money from the workers and the employers and used it —

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): On a point of order, Speaker: I don't believe there's a quorum in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you check and see if there is a quorum present, please.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Chatham-Kent.

Mr Carroll: I want to thank the member for noting that there was not a quorum in the House, the member for Ottawa West, formerly of the Liberal Party, who now has found his rightful place with the New Democrats. I thank him for paying attention and understanding there wasn't a quorum.

As I was saying, the federal government, over and above having taken this excess of \$19 billion out of the hides of workers and employers in the country, most of it out of Ontario, is now going to beat us up with some new CPP premiums come January. The federal Liberal government just does not understand the concept of giving more money to the taxpayers and keeping less to waste in government.

We should also make reference to some changes made relative to children's aid societies, because that's another area of concern in our province. Child welfare obviously is very important. The minister just recently announced that 760 new front-line workers will be hired to supplement the activities of the children's aid societies so they can provide better care for children at risk. There will be extensive new training programs offered so that those front-line people who are working with these young children, who are sometimes coming out of deplorable situations, know better how to deal with these young children at risk.

The minister has announced that there'll be an 85% increase in the stipend paid to foster families, to foster parents. We need to find 500 more new locations, foster parents who will provide care to these children who are at risk.

We also know that the minister has announced a new funding formula for children's aid societies, one that replaces what in actual fact was a very inefficient formula. The new formula has more to do with caseload. It will allow children's aid societies to manage their job or their performance better and to do more planning.

So there have been several changes announced there as a result of hard work by this government to improve the operation of children's aid societies.

We know too that one of the issues we have to deal with between now and the Christmas break hopefully will be final work on the new changes to the Child and Family Services Act, changes that will result in the Child and Family Services Act focusing on its paramount or number one objective: the protection of children. Too often in the past we've seen the rights of the child or the protection of the child somehow not being paramount when the decisions were made about children who were in jeopardy. The new changes that are proposed, if this House accepts them — hopefully that will happen before Christmas — will provide better safety and protection for children.

2120

We've also introduced a common risk assessment to allow children's aid society front-line workers to better assess a situation with children to make sure that there is a consistency as to how we interpret children at risk and what we do to protect them.

We also know that a new information database is being worked on that will link all of the children's aid societies across the province so that if a family moves from point A to point B, if they've had contact with the children's aid society in point A, that information will be available through the database to the children's aid people in point

B, so that again we can make sure that we provide the utmost protection to the children who are at risk.

So a lot of changes are coming in that area, all of which still have to be passed by this House, one of the reasons it's necessary that we extend the sittings.

I want to mention the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children initiative. Some time ago the minister announced that we would be expanding funding of that program up to \$50 million. Of all the programs that have come along in the last little while, this particular one focuses on those children who are identified as at risk at the time they're born so that we can assist the mother or the father or the parents or whoever in making sure that the child who is at risk gets all the possible advantages they can get so that as they grow and develop they're not shortchanged, they're offered all of the protection we can offer them and given all of the opportunity to blossom into participating members of our society and therefore improve the quality of their life. We've expanded dramatically the funding of that program we introduced and have announced that funding will eventually go from an initial \$10 million up to \$50 million.

I want to talk for a minute about some issues regarding safety. We all participated a couple of weeks ago in an announcement by the Solicitor General of funding for a 1,000 new front-line police officers to be dispersed around our province so that all communities —

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): Forty-two in Halton.

Mr Carroll: Forty-two in Halton, 17 in Chatham-Kent — so that all of us living in our communities can feel safer because we will have more front-line police officers patrolling our streets. That was an initiative put forward by the Solicitor General. It's a partnership between that ministry and municipalities to fund 1,000 extra police officers.

We also know that we recently, as of the end of November, introduced enormously expanded fines for people who are caught driving with their licences under suspension. We've even gone so far as to eventually impound their cars. At some point in time, we must have people of the province understand that to drive a car while your licence is suspended because of criminal activity will not be tolerated. We will not allow it, and if we have to impound their cars, then we are prepared to do that. So tough new safety features have been implemented by the Ministry of Transportation.

Also, of course, at this time of year we're all very much aware of our expanded RIDE program that is designed to keep drunk drivers off the road. I heard it announced today in the news that the region of Peel has issued categorically, absolutely zero tolerance for drunk drivers. They will tolerate some other issues, I guess, but when it comes to drunk driving, zero tolerance for drunk drivers. Hopefully all communities in the province will pick up on that.

Those are some initiatives that have been put forward by ministries regarding safety issues.

We've done a lot in Ontario since we got started but there is so much more to do. When we talk about sitting for an extra four days and when we talk about sitting till midnight, it's tough to sit in the Legislature from 1:30 in the afternoon — I know, Mr Speaker, you sit long hours and I know how difficult that is some nights to do that and to sometimes listen to conservation that's somewhat less than stimulating and oftentimes repetitive. But it's about working harder, it's about working more effectively for the people of the province, because they're the people who are paying the bills.

Like you, Mr Speaker, I come from the private sector. I can remember, going back into the early 1980s, the private sector coming to grips with the fact that doing business as usual was no longer acceptable. The world had shrunk to the point where those of us operating in Ontario had to compete with those operating in other jurisdictions, many with much more efficient operations than we had, sometimes because they were new, sometimes because they had lower labour costs, but oftentimes because they had considerably less expensive government.

As I went through that whole process in the private sector, the one thing that always frustrated me as a private entrepreneur, a private sector operator being forced to find more efficient, better ways of doing things, was that every year my taxes kept going up. The provincial sales tax kept going up, and then we got the famous GST. The Prime Minister of the country said, "If I'm elected I will get rid of the GST," but it's still with us. All those taxes kept going up year after year, despite the fact that as a private businessman I had to find better and better ways to do my business and reduce my costs. It got to the point, of course, where for all of us the largest single expense in our lives was paying taxes.

I don't know of anybody I've met in my journeys through this place or through my previous life who minded paying taxes provided they could be assured that the money they were spending on taxes was in fact being efficiently spent. But that has not been the case. There is ample evidence that as the world went through restructuring, as the private sector went through restructuring, government did not understand what restructuring meant. They continued to suck more and more money out of the economy and take it to themselves.

During the 10 years that preceded our arrival in this place the two parties opposite raised taxes 65 times, with no regard for the fact that as they took more money away from the constituents, that left less money for them to spend to generate activity in the economy.

The private sector, where many of us come from, was fed up with the fact that they were the only ones trying to figure out a better way to do things. Government had not gotten to that point yet. We came here as a government with an enormous number of commitments we made to the people of Ontario, commitments to change how we do things.

I, for one, did not expect it to be quite so difficult. I really thought that all of us were here to make it a better

place for our children and our grandchildren to live. I really thought that's why we were all here. I didn't fully understand the whole concept of the opposition thing. I really thought that all people here of common mind would say, "What is the best thing we can do for the taxpayers of the province?"

I find out, now that I'm here, that's not what everybody is interested in. There's a thing that gets in the way oftentimes that causes us not to concentrate on that. But that should not deter us from our goal that we stated when we asked to be sent here to represent the people and that we've worked on diligently since we got here, and that is to make sure Ontario is a province that affords the same kind of opportunity to your children and my children and your grandchildren, assuming you have some, Mr Speaker — and I'm not sure about that, but I have some — the same kind of opportunity we enjoyed when we were their age. It's a simple goal but an enormously complex task.

It's now almost half past 9; we will stay here till 12 o'clock tonight. We sit here because we have work to do. Despite the fact that it's approaching the Christmas season and that time of year when people start to relax a little bit more, we will be here all of this week, we will be here all of next week, we will be sitting till midnight every night because we have work to do. We must be committed to finishing that job.

2130

Mr Baird: We will never surrender. We will beat them on the beaches. We will beat them in the streets.

Mr Carroll: My fellow members jest, but we must be committed to finishing that job because it is in the best interests of the taxpayers we represent.

I hadn't planned on making any comments tonight, because I thought it was going to be a little different night than it was. But given the opportunity, I appreciate that. I want you to know that all of us on this side are prepared to do all that we have to do to make sure that once again Ontario is the driving engine of the economy of Canada.

Mr Gerretsen: I listened very closely to the member for Chatham-Kent. The first point I'd like to make is that when he said he thought it would be easier to work for the people of Ontario to try to get some changes to our system, and all those kinds of comments, the thought that kept going through my mind was, "Yes, let's make sure we make things better for the people of Ontario, but let's make sure we do it for all of the people of Ontario."

The thing I'm bothered by is this attitude of this government that somehow things are better when things really aren't better. Let me give you an example. Right in today's paper we read of the Progress of Canada's Children report, which is put together annually. It states that our kids' lives are worsening. The state of their "well-being is declining on more than half of nine indicators — from health to economic security.

"Poor children are getting poorer and they're suffering more."

That is not a partisan issue. That is something we should all do something about, irrespective of party. We should be working on that because that, to my way of thinking, is totally and completely unacceptable in a

country and province that have as much to offer as Canada and Ontario.

Most of the people I talk to out there get the distinct impression that this government wants certain people in our society under certain circumstances to do better, but the gap, as we've talked about earlier already today, between the rich and the poor is widening all the time. I would think that is unacceptable, regardless of whether you're a Tory, a New Democrat, a Liberal or an independent thinker out there; it doesn't matter. This is an unacceptable circumstance and condition we find ourselves in.

There's another report in the same paper which refers to the fact that here in the city of Toronto 37% of our children, 400,000 children, live in poverty. That surely is unacceptable.

When they see the actions this government has taken over the last three years, most people I've talked to have come to the conclusion that a lot of the government's activities have been basically to attack these situations; not to attack them in the sense of trying to resolve them, but attacking in the sense of certainly not making it better for the people who live in poverty and the children who are poor in our society.

Today I picked up a little publication, a pamphlet that's put together by the Interfaith Witness for Social Justice and Compassion here at Queen's Park. Apparently, since October 1995 this organization has maintained a weekly vigil here at Queen's Park from 12 noon to 1:30 to protest the injustices of the Harris government.

We've had a similar group that has been operating in my community of Kingston, where for half an hour every Friday since August of 1995 this group, headed by the Sisters of Providence in Kingston, has been holding silent vigils to protest the cuts in social assistance and the cuts in services to the poor in our society.

What drew my attention to this particular pamphlet was a limerick which was inspired by the Harris government. I would like to take this opportunity to read it to you and to the people of Ontario. I think it's very well done, and it really tells a story in a different sort of way. It says:

We vigil every week at Queen's Park
In all weather — not really a lark.
So what's good use of leisure
Is quite hard to measure.
We hope we are making a mark.

There's a guy at Queen's Park called Harris
His program is beginning to scare us.
If he thinks it a cure
To take from the poor
Then, from common "nonsense," please spare us.

Downsizing is negative construction
Ideology of growth by reduction
But short-term thinking
Is a kind of hoodwinking
And the slippery slope to destruction.

The Tories are as mean as they come
 For now each has a political plum.
 But come next election
 We'll make a selection
 So they'll be the welfare bum!

A second term is Harris's goal.
 For that he'll need a good poll.
 So his sudden passion
 For hep C compassion,
 Is a kind of damage control.

Now nothing can be more obscene
 Than Mike on the TV screen
 But perhaps we'll get closure
 From overexposure
 And he'll soon just be a has-been.

We vigilers are birds of a feather
 We witness in all kinds of weather.
 In rain, hail or snow
 We want you to know
 Getting justice means working together.

If my friend the member for Chatham-Kent and the backbenchers in the government are really interested in working for all of the people of Ontario, I would just like to remind them about those kids, the 37% of our kids who live in poverty; or about the fact that the disparity between the rich and the poor is ever-growing in this province. That is certainly something they have done absolutely nothing about.

The other point I wanted to very briefly raise today — and I see that the minister is back in the House, and we welcome her; I've got a lot of regard for the Minister of Citizenship and Culture — deals with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act that has just been introduced. I know that groups out there have been complaining about the act. We have been complaining about the fact that the act really doesn't do anything.

I would like to read a very short paragraph in a letter I received that was an open letter to Mike Harris. I know all members of the Legislature received a copy of this letter as well. It's written by the president of the Ontario March of Dimes. I think all of us in the Legislature know of the tremendous hard work that the March of Dimes has done over the years for our disabled community. I know they operate in just about every community in Ontario. We can all be extremely proud of the work they've done. Let's just hear for a moment what they have to say about the current Ontarians with Disabilities Act as introduced by the minister. I'm reading from that part of the letter which deals with the ODA. It states:

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"As you know, during the last election, you" — meaning Mike Harris — "made a promise that your government would introduce an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during its first term. The three-page act your government introduced does nothing to address the vast

range of barriers that confront persons with disabilities. The act does not require government to remove or prevent a single barrier. There is no requirement for consultation, there is no duty to comply. It does not bestow any increased rights, and it most certainly has nothing to do with the resolution passed unanimously in the Legislature on October 29, which called for a strong, meaningful and effective ODA.

"To refer to the proposed legislation as an Ontarians with Disabilities Act is misleading and unacceptable."

I'm reading from the letter. These are not my words; these are the words of Duncan Read, president of the Ontario March of Dimes. He continues:

"While there may be cost implications to implement a comprehensive ODA which conflict with the goals of the Common Sense Revolution, we had hoped that your government would recognize the economic benefits of full societal participation of persons with disabilities and make a genuine effort to remove physical barriers.

"Introducing legislation with the name Ontarians with Disabilities Act, but which lacks substance negates the goodwill of your government. There are 1.5 million Ontarians (close to a million voters), who will benefit by the effective removal of barriers, and a whole province that will benefit from an increasingly independent and productive population.

"We urge you to fulfill your promise and eagerly await the introduction of legislation worthy of the name Ontarians with Disabilities Act."

There is no way that anybody could say it better than the president of the Ontario March of Dimes, and it's not too late. It's not too late for the minister to go back to the cabinet table and say to Mike Harris and her fellow colleagues in cabinet: "The act that we have introduced simply isn't adequate. Let us do something meaningful. Let us live up to our promises. Let us introduce a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act." I'm absolutely positive, from the people I've heard in my community, that there isn't anybody who has been awaiting this act who feels that the act as currently introduced is anywhere near adequate. Minister, please do the right thing. Introduce a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act, as called for by Mr Read in his letter to your Premier on November 26.

The other thing I want to talk about very briefly in the few minutes I have left is the state of our Ontario health care system. I know many of us are going around seeing lots of people, maybe doing a little bit of pre-election canvassing to see what the mood of the people is out there. I have done so extensively over the last couple of months, and I can tell you that there is no issue about which Ontarians feel stronger than a good-quality health care system. I know that people in my area are confused with the system as it currently operates in my community of Kingston, feel that there have been major changes and that there is a deterioration of health care services.

As you know, we in Kingston have a medical health sciences complex and we have a medical school at Queen's University. It's the smallest of the five that operate in the Kingston area, and as a result of the Harris

destruction or restructuring commission, one of our hospitals is being closed. The Hotel Dieu is being closed, a hospital that has operated in the Kingston community for 153 years. A petition was taken up to ensure that the Hotel Dieu would stay open, and it was signed by 66,000 individuals, which is quite impressive in a total community catchment area of probably some 150,000 people, but the way it is right now, depending upon what happens in the court action, it looks as if the government may actually get its wish and close the hospital.

When you sort out what has happened with all the finances relating to the hospital system, you pretty quickly come to the conclusion that a minimum of \$25 million per year has been taken out of the hospital health care system in the Kingston area as a result of all this restructuring. Their total budget has gone from about \$250 million to less than \$225 million as a result of all the restructuring. This was always sold to the people of my area on the basis of, "Don't worry, we are going into a system of community health care which is different than the hospital-focused care we have had."

It's very ironic. In exactly the same week that the Hotel Dieu Hospital was given its final sentence of having to close as a health care facility, what was the other thing that happened of major consequence to my community? I'll tell you. Some 2,000 patients in the Kingston area were cut off from their home care services. The local CCAC, community care access centre, felt that because it didn't have the money, it had to cut off 2,000 individuals, people who had been receiving home care and could no longer receive home care, because it didn't have enough money.

As it turned out, none of the \$25 million in health care costs that has been permanently taken out of my community has gone into community care. I have heard of some — not only heard of some but seen some very frightening situations. I was in a home the other day where a 74-year-old, not in very good health, said: "Mr Gerretsen, we don't know what to do. Our home care has been significantly reduced," I believe from two hours per day to one hour per week. I said: "I feel very sorry for you. Maybe there's something that can be done about it." Then the lady went on to say, "It's not for me; it's for my 99-year-old mother." She invited me inside the house, and there was a 99-year-old individual lying on a couch, not able to move, who had received nursing care for two hours per day and who, as a result of the budgetary cuts in the Kingston area, can no longer get that care.

I checked into it, and the executive director and the various other people at the CCAC said, "I'm sorry, we just can't do anything more than the one or two hours at most per week that we can now give this individual, because of budgetary cuts." The irony is this: As a result of this kind of home care cut, either one of two things will happen. I pray to God it won't happen, but it may very well happen. Either the lady is no longer going to be with us very soon, because as a 99-year old she needs care, or she is going to end up in a home or in a hospital at probably about 20 or 30 times the amount that it would

cost to send a nurse in there for two hours a day. You tell me. I'd love to hear the minister's comments on this, because if she has an answer, then let's set all partisan differences aside and deal with this kind of situation.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): You should phone your community care.

Mr Gerretsen: I did phone my community care, and they couldn't do anything, because you have cut off their funding. This is only one —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. In debate you address the Chair, please.

Mr Gerretsen: I apologize for that, Mr Speaker, but it was the minister who said to me, "Then you should talk to the minister and maybe the minister can do something about it." Is that any way to run a health care system? I can assure you that the people who are involved with the CCAC in Kingston darned well know their business. I'm sure they have good reason, in their limited budgeting, they cannot look after this individual.

All I'm saying is that I'm telling you the truth. That's what happened, and it has happened to many people throughout this province. I'm saying to you, Minister, why don't you do something about it?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: You've got a problem.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, order, please.

Mr Gerretsen: You're the person in a place of authority to do something about it.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Why don't you —

The Acting Speaker: Minister, order.

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Mr Gerretsen: I am merely raising this issue to show the kinds of things that are happening in community care across the province. This isn't one instance. I can tell you of other instances where the same thing happened. These CCACs don't have enough money to provide the kinds of services they need to.

The minister talks about, "You people in the Kingston area have always had too much money and we're trying to bring it down to the same level all across the province," but what you totally fail to recognize is the fact that in some communities the community home care has been going on for so much longer and their programs are much more advanced and maybe people have been released out of hospital at a much quicker rate than in other places because of these kinds of services that were available.

Interjection: Because the doctors want it that way.

Mr Gerretsen: If you people have all the answers, then I wish you would come down to my community, deal with the CCAC, listen to them and try to deal with some of these horrible situations.

Obviously the government just doesn't get it. People out there are hurting and we should care about all the people of Ontario.

Mr Cullen: I'd like to compliment the member for Kingston and The Islands for bringing forward the concerns in his constituency to the attention of the House.

It may not be the kind of message that members opposite want to hear, but he has been elected, as I have been elected, to present the concerns of our constituents to this House.

I have to tell you that in Ottawa West health care still ranks as the number one major issue. We are still seeing the government proceeding with the closing of the Riverside Hospital, of the Grace hospital, the downsizing of the Elisabeth Bruyère, the Montfort and the Ottawa Civic Hospital. These are real issues that concern the members of my community; so much so that the member for a riding near me has put out a special householder called Health Care Report: Special Edition, trying to assuage the fears of the community.

But people in this House know that it was merely three years ago that this government cut children's aid societies by 20%. I was on the children's aid society board for Ottawa-Carleton and we had to put into place Harris days. When you find yourselves five months into the year of your budget and you're finding yourself being cut by some 20%, how do you recover the money? Of course not. So what we had to do, unfortunately, was put into place Harris days. In other words, staff were given time off without pay so we could balance our budget.

Mr Baird: What about Rae days? What about your former leader?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, you don't have the floor.

Mr Cullen: It was even worse than the so-called Rae days that the member opposite talks about, which were there to save jobs.

So I'm saying to the members opposite here, when this government came into place, when the Mike Harris government came into place, not only did they cut the social assistance rates by 21.6% but they also cut children's aid societies by 20%, they eliminated the municipal support programs, funding for shelters was cut. The whole history is there.

Mr Speaker, I'm off topic. I was only wanting to compliment the member for Kingston and The Islands for presenting the issues of concern in his riding.

In my riding people are concerned about the schools that are being slated for closure as a result of this government's school closure policy. The community is in an absolute outrage because none of these schools will be closed based on program reasons. I know that if there is a program reason to look at whether a school should exist or not, that is certainly a viable reason to look at whether or not that's the best means to provide education for the children in that community. But that's not what's going on here whatsoever. That too is another issue, and I'm certainly more than happy to talk about property tax.

We're here at about 10 to 10 this evening, dealing with a motion presented earlier today that, notwithstanding our standing orders, the House shall continue to meet from 6:30 to 12 midnight on December 14, 15, 16 and 17 for the purpose of conducting government business. Here we are at 10 to 10 in a debate on a calendar motion that's

going to go on to midnight. People may be wondering why we would spend time doing this. Quite frankly, it's the government's motion and it's the government's business that sets the order of the day here in this House.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): You're a dipper now.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Brant-Haldimand, you're not in your seat.

Mr Cullen: When I look at votes and proceedings and the order paper for this Legislature, looking at the government agenda, we have some 25, 26 government bills, some 50 private members' bills, and in a week's time we're going to break, according to standing orders of this House, and not come back till March 22.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): The NDP government only sat for three weeks in their last year.

Mr Baird: When we come back, you'll wish we hadn't.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, member for Northumberland.

Mr Cullen: I'm looking at about 24 bills, plus the 50 or so private member's bills that each of us who has presented bills has presented in good faith, and we're wondering, "Why is it that the time has been so spent that we're sitting to midnight this week, we're sitting to midnight next week, to accomplish this agenda, one third of which we know the government wants to, needs to get through, one third of which there would be, I believe, all-party consent in terms of the non-controversial aspects and one third of which the government really has no interest whatsoever in pursuing?"

I just want to pursue that a little bit further, because when I look at these bills — Bill 38, the Condominium Act; Bill 48, the Courts of Justice Amendment Act, dealing with family courts; Bill 53, the Law Society Amendment Act — these acts were introduced in the summer, they were introduced this fall. Then there's Bill 55, the Apprenticeship and Certification Act; Bill 56, dealing with the Greater Toronto Services Board; Bill 57, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act; Bill 61 — now this is a bill the government has to get through; this is the Property Tax Deadline Extension Act —

Mr Preston: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member opposite is deciding for this government what we consider to be important or not, and I don't think he is competent to do that or a lot of other things.

Mr Cullen: It's clearly the government that's incompetent in handling its own agenda, because here it has come in with a calendar motion extending our sittings to midnight, not this week but next week, and it won't even get its agenda done. As a matter of fact, if we look at these bills, how is it going to get this bill, the Property Tax Deadline Extension Act, which was introduced September 28, which is designed to extend the appeal deadline for property taxes past the end of September 1998 — what's the date today? Is this not December 7? This was a bill that was introduced at almost the last day of sitting in September to extend the deadline for property tax appeals and it hasn't even got it done yet? That's amazing.

We go on: Bill 68, the Legal Aid Services Act; Bill 69, the Integrity Commissioner and Lobbyists Statute Law Amendment Act; Bill 70, which seeks to sell Highway 407; Bill 72, dealing with intercountry adoption; Bill 73, the Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Bill 74, the Fuel and Gasoline Tax Amendment Act; Bill 76, the Social Work and Social Service Work Act; Bill 79, the Fairness for Property Taxpayers Act — this is another bill that seeks to amend the previous bill on property taxes that hasn't been passed by this House yet, and this is the eighth bill on property taxes.

As a matter of fact, if I could just take a moment to reflect, here Bill 79 is the eighth bill, not the seventh, but the eighth bill on property tax since this whole property tax reform business began some 23 months ago. Let's think here: eight bills over 23 months of the government trying to get it right and get it right again — made another error, get it right, made another error, get it right again. How much time has this government wasted on trying to correct its property tax errors?

When we look through each bill here — and this is a government that has set a record in terms of time allocation. Time allocation, as you know, is closure, is shutting down debate, and every time this government does it, it means that the process of considering legislation, what the opposition is here for, to make sure the legislation is well aired, is perfected, we criticize so that the government can take these criticisms and perfect the legislation, it doesn't do it. So what happens? Bill after bill after bill after bill after bill after bill after bill on property tax.

2200

We're talking about a calendar motion that seeks to extend our sitting time, our sitting period, because this government couldn't get its act organized to deal with property tax reform in an effective manner, refused to listen to the experts out there who deal with property tax. They wanted to come forward at committee, but unfortunately when the government passes time allocation it shuts down the committee process. You have a day to deal with amendments and if they're not done by such-and-such a time they're carried. Is this any way to run the government? Look at it: eight bills.

What is happening? This is December 12. When does the property tax year end? December 31. What are we dealing with? Two bills on property tax that have yet to go through the process, and on top of that, the government's going to come in with amendments. It has to in Ottawa-Carleton. The member for Nepean knows it has to in Ottawa-Carleton. He's got the letter from the city of Nepean saying, "Please amend Bill 79 to make sure that the payments in lieu of property taxes, that the federal government please amend it."

Mr Baird: We did that this morning.

Mr Cullen: Of course, so these amendments are tabled. For heaven's sake, why wasn't it done the first time? Why do we have to go through all this? Can the member for Nepean explain to us why this wasn't thought about 23 months ago when the government went down this path?

I'm only on Bill 79. As well, we have to deal with Bill 81, dealing with the outcome of the budget that was tabled last May. It's amazing: Last May the government comes in with a budget and then it tables for the first time on November 23 the legislation to bring into place the budget that it presented last May. Didn't they think about it at the time? Obviously not.

We have the Environmental Statute Law Amendment Act, Bill 82. Then Bill 83 — oh, it is sad. I have to pause at Bill 83, and I pity the poor minister who sponsored the bill. It can't have been her idea to come forward with this pitiful piece of paper that is called the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I look at the preamble, and the preamble takes up almost all of one page. The preamble of course has no legal force, but I just want to quote from the preamble because it says here, "It is the shared responsibility of everyone in Ontario to identify, remove and prevent barriers to the participation of persons with disabilities."

One would think that this legislation would therefore provide us with the tools to ensure that these barriers are being removed so that people with disabilities could participate in our community on an equal footing with everyone else. But does it do this? Oh, no, not at all. In fact, it even goes on in this preamble. It says here, "Identifying, preventing and removing barriers will increase the contribution of persons with disabilities to the economic and social life of the province." That's true. That's something that all of us here would want to see happen, and we find all of us here willing to work to make it so.

It is so sad what's in this bill, because this bill, besides giving a section on purpose and one definition, then goes to section 3. There are only seven sections to this act: a purpose; one definition; section 3, dealing with ministry plans re barriers; section 4, dealing with a review of the act; section 5, recognition of existing legal obligations; section 6, the commencement; and section 7, the title.

In this short act you start looking for where the meat is, and you go to section 3, ministry plans re barriers. This is the meat of the bill. The meat of the bill says, "As part of each ministry's annual planning process, every minister shall prepare a plan for the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities...." This is already part of the action plan for these ministries. The minister responsible for Management Board services would tell you that is already there, that the ministries are already doing this task, so this piece of legislation merely formalizes what they're doing.

How does this help the ordinary Ontarian who lives out in this community in achieving a reduction of barriers so they can go down the street, enter a store, go to the wash-room, pay their bills at a bank, go to the hardware store, pick up their mail, go to their job, be able to access public transit, go to a child care centre to pick up their four-year-old daughter, go to their school to talk to their son's teacher, go to the hospital to visit their mother, go to a nursing home to visit their father, any of those things? Is that in this bill? Sadly — and it is sad — they are not. It's a failure of a bill.

I said earlier that there are so many bills before this Legislature, so many government bills, and I can't speak for the government, but I'm projecting from the comments made by the ministers. There are about a third there that need passage; there are about a third there that, generally speaking, as I said, with some work with the other parties, our party included, we would find common ground on; and about a third that are meant to go nowhere. I would say to you, this pitiful piece of paper known as Bill 83, the so-called Ontarians with Disabilities Act, merely enshrines review of ministerial policies, which if any minister had any guts would make sure were in place already. I'm sorry, that's clearly a bill that's not meant to go anywhere. It's for show, only for show.

It is sad because the disability community, which we know is a growing community, which we know seeks to participate because they have skills, they have things to contribute to our society, their expectations were so raised by this government, by the leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, saying, with his pearly blue eyes, into the camera, "A promise made is a promise kept," and there would be a new Ontarians with Disabilities Act by this government during its mandate.

I'm sorry, we have this bill here and it is for show, simply for show, and it's a cruel disappointment for those people with disabilities who earnestly believed there would be some way that the government would use the mandate that it had to facilitate their participation in our community. This government has fired a cap gun and it is a blank. It is sad.

That's only Bill 83. We've got a number of other bills here: Bill 85, the Vintners Quality Alliance Act; Bill 90, the Automobile Insurance Consumer Protection Act; Bill 92, the Emergency Volunteers Protection Act; Bill 93, the Franchise Disclosure Act, and the government is promising even more bills coming down the pipe. We're sitting here only to the end of next week, sitting in midnight sittings. We're taking this time, now at five after 10, going on to midnight, to discuss this calendar motion the government has put forward, and yet we're expecting to hear an election next spring.

Maybe the House will come back in January, maybe not. The standing orders say that we don't come back until March 22, so I have to ask my colleagues around here, why this sudden thought in the last few weeks of December that we're going to have extended sittings to accomplish this? Why can't this House do its job properly? Why does it have to set the world's record here, certainly in Ontario, for time allocation motions? I mean, 24 time allocation motions, which shuts down the public consultation process, which shuts down the ability to properly consider legislation and look at amendments, and I just have to go back to that sad, sad story of all these property tax bills.

On January 16, 1997, we had the tabling of the first property tax bill, the Fair Municipal Finance Act, Bill 106. It was within weeks that we had Bill 149, the Fair Municipal Finance Act (No. 2), because they didn't get number one right the first time. Then we found Bill 160,

which of course consumed a lot of time because Bill 160 took over the provincial administration of property tax for the purposes of education. Then we had Bill 164, the Tax Credits to Create Jobs Act, because, on the heels of Bill 160, they had to set new rules for the Assessment Review Board. Then we had Bill 179, more rules for the property tax assessment board.

That was the last session, and then we moved into this session where the government realized, "We've done all these tremendous changes to property tax but we need a toolkit for municipalities, and besides, we goofed on small businesses and we goofed on charities," so they came in with Bill 15, the Tax Cuts for People and for Small Business Act, and then Bill 16, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act.

2210

All this time consumed over property tax, property tax reform, and did they get that right? Not at all. They had to come in with Bill 61, which is still on the books here, which we have yet to pass, and now Bill 79, all dealing with the extensions of the deadlines for property tax.

I'm sorry, but here we are dealing with a calendar motion that has legislators sitting to midnight because the government doesn't know how to deal with its own business. The government is elected to bring the business to the Legislature, yet, in so doing, with the majority that it has, quite clearly fumbles the ball.

We're going to be here next week until midnight. We're going to have of course a high level of debate as the hours go on and on, and we'll be doing the business of the House. But I look to this government to bring us back in January, to have us do the work, send out the bills to committees. I'm looking forward to that process because that is the process by which we perfect legislation. Remember, it's the government that proposes, but it's the legislative process here that makes sure that we have good law, and I look forward to that opportunity.

Mr Galt: It has been very entertaining listening to some of the debate here this evening. Earlier in the evening the member for London Centre had some interesting comments about consultation and the amount of consultation that's been carried out. I think she would be interested in some of the facts and figures of how it has really been going on with this government.

If you look at the number of sessional days versus the number of bills that have been passed during the first three years, with the PCs in this 36th Parliament, we have been sitting for some 361 days and we have passed 89 bills. That seems like quite a little bit. The NDP, in the 35th Parliament, in their first three years sat for 278 days — almost 100 days less — and they passed 143 bills, and the member was criticizing about consultation and the speed of bills.

Mr Gerretsen: It's not the number of bills, it's the quality.

Mrs Boyd: It's the nature of your bills.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands. Member for London Centre.

Mr Galt: In their first three years, in the 34th Parliament — I guess the truth hurts a bit, but these are facts and figures. In the Liberal government, the 34th Parliament, in the first three years they sat for —

Mr Gerretsen: It's not the number of bills.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Kingston and The Islands, you had your turn, please. Member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for getting control of the House here. They were getting just a little noisy.

What I was saying when I was so rudely interrupted was that the Liberals, in their 34th Parliament, in the first three years sat for 297 days, a little more than the NDP, and they passed 183 different bills.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): You've got to be joking.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Lambton.

Mr Galt: That's more than double what the PCs have passed.

I think the other part that's interesting here is during second reading. The people at home may not know, but that's when the extensive debate goes on over bills.

Let's talk about the first session and the average time at second reading in the PC government, the 36th Parliament, we debated for four hours and 50 minutes. How long did the NDP spend on each bill? One hour and 28 minutes. How long did the Liberals spend in the 34th Parliament? One hour and eight minutes.

In the second session, the PCs spent five hours and 33 minutes — we increased in the second session — while the NDP really came up too. They came up to three hours and 55 minutes. We have to congratulate them. The Liberals in the second session got all the way up to one hour and 38 minutes.

I think the thing that is really interesting — you should look at how much time was spent on the third reading. In the third reading, the 36th Parliament, the PCs in the first session spent two hours and 10 minutes per bill, the NDP spent a mere 48 minutes per bill, and when you get to the Liberals — this is the one I think is really interesting — the Liberals in the 34th Parliament, third reading in the first session, spent all of seven minutes per bill. We spent two hours and 10 minutes.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is basically for the information of the members: The Liberal bills were all good bills as opposed to the bills that have been introduced here.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I was always taught to be honest and truthful in the House in the comments that I make. I hope the others will change just a little from that last comment. That was something else.

In the second session, the Liberals in the 34th Parliament more than doubled the amount of time they gave each bill for third reading and they went all the way up to 15 minutes per bill; the NDP, in the 35th, gave two hours and two minutes; and the Conservatives — oh, this is bad

— one hour and 41 minutes. We shouldn't have covered that.

We moved down the amount of hours spent out on hearings. The member for London Centre was referring to consultation. I think she'd find it interesting that in our 36th Parliament, we've spent 773 hours and 29 minutes out on the road.

Mrs Boyd: No, not out on the road; mostly here.

Mr Galt: Well, in consultation.

Mrs Boyd: Mostly here.

The Acting Speaker: Member for London Centre.

Mr Galt: It's expensive out on the road.

The NDP spent 645 hours while the Liberals spent a mere 349 hours, less than half what the Conservatives were spending.

A lot has been said tonight about what the government's been doing.

Mr Gerretsen: What are you trying to do, lose our audience?

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Kingston and The Islands. I'll just wait for a few minutes. Member for Northumberland, you only have the floor.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. It's absolutely amazing how much noise three Liberals and two New Democrats can make in the House.

What I want to do is talk a bit about our track record. The opposition's been talking a lot about the track record and the bill. I think we should have a look at the platform and where we've been and where we've come from.

There's a summary here on page 3 of the Common Sense Revolution that talks about "Cut Provincial Income Taxes," "Cut Government Spending," "Cut Government Barriers to Job Creation," "Cut the size of Government" and "Balance the budget," things we've either accomplished or are about to.

As you move to page 4 of our platform, "Lowering Your Taxes," there's been a lot of criticism from the opposition about lowering taxes. I guess they stand for higher taxes, which is indeed unfortunate. We stand for lower taxes. It's interesting to see the chart in here showing that where taxes were increased, less revenue actually came in. We can check this one off as mission accomplished. It's been done. We've cut the income tax by some 30%.

I've just been passed some information here, "Bob Rae says Harris is right." That's refreshing coming from the NDP, but it's not surprising that an economist like Rae, who is quite a way to the right of the NDP and maybe even to the right of the Liberals, would understand this, I'm sure.

It's also interesting, and I quote from the Ottawa Sunday Sun, May 24, 1998, "'Liberals Lie,' NDP Boss Says," and "Provincial Party Plots Strategy." Then we have from the Toronto Sun, "It's Jobs, Jobs, Jobs in Ontario; 85% of 73,000 National Total." That was back on October 10. And I think this is the worst of all, and we've been seeing this, "McGuinty Vague On Purpose." There is absolutely no question that has been going on.

Getting back to the Common Sense Revolution, talking about taxes, certainly income tax has been cut. That's one we can stroke off. We've reduced corporate taxes. We got rid of the employer health tax. That was the one the Liberals brought in back in the late 1960s that was really a job killer. You can see where the number of jobs dipped significantly after that particular one came in. On taxes, we can check that off. Where did we get the employer health tax? Where did we get those dollars back? We got them in the fair share health tax, and that's for those making over \$50,000. There's a levy of 0.2% for those making between \$50,000 and \$60,000, and it works its way up to 2% over \$150,000.

2220

The opposition likes to talk a lot about the big tax cuts to the rich when in fact we've actually increased the taxes to the rich. It is compensated, of course, with the 30% tax cut, but they did not get nearly as much as the opposition would like to suggest.

We move on through the platform and the things accomplished to "Less Government Spending." We heard so many times today when we were debating the environment bill that both opposition parties obviously want to spend more money. They don't like the idea of putting a tracer on the truck or putting something on the load so you can follow it. One person can follow two or three loads simultaneously. Before it took five or six people to monitor and follow these loads so they'd know that the same material that went on the truck ends up at the destination. They know where it came from and where it's going to end up. They don't seem interested in doing things in new and different ways; they're only interested in spending more money and hiring more people.

I can understand them wanting people to have jobs, but this \$9 billion that we're paying in interest on the debt, that's over \$1 million an hour, every hour, that we pay in interest. Imagine: \$9 billion. That's half the of total health care. We could increase our health care by another 50% if it wasn't for all this interest going out, just as one good example.

"Protecting Priority Services." We can check that one off as a job well done.

Under "Health Care," we have increased the budget significantly from the \$17.4 billion when we took over to well over \$18 billion now, crowding up to \$19 billion.

Under "Law Enforcement," we just sent out enough dollars so that municipalities are able to hire another 1,000 police officers.

"Education." Certainly, there's priority there. We've actually increased the funding for education. We're now spending some \$14.5 billion, and another \$3.3 billion for universities and colleges.

Moving on to "Finding the Savings," "Fewer Politicians," we're committed to reducing the number of politicians in Ontario. We've certainly carried through on that with the fewer politicians bill. In the next election, there will be 103 elected instead of the 130 in the last election.

We talked about "Restructuring the Bureaucracy," another one that we have accomplished. We've accom-

plished this in many ways, laying off approximately 13,000 civil servants. It's unfortunate to lose those jobs but, like private industry, we know the job can be done with less administration, and it's being done very capably by the civil servants who are still working for the province of Ontario. We're also moving on customer service and restructuring, taking big steps forward in that particular area.

Under "Reform Welfare," we have reformed welfare significantly. The numbers are dropping. Over one third of the people who were on welfare when we took office are now off welfare and out working, most with permanent jobs, feeling so much better about themselves than they were prior to June 8 when they were caught in this vicious circle.

"Workfare" and "Learnfare" we can check off as accomplished and completed. The government is doing what it said it would, a real rarity in politics in the last 10, 15, 20 years, but we certainly have the reputation for doing what we said we were going to do. Regarding workfare, I just hear so many people who have been involved with workfare saying what a boon it's been to them, an opportunity to get out and prove themselves, to get a recommendation from a supervisor, and it gives them an opportunity to get back into the workforce.

Working with "Seniors and the Disabled," we've recognized a lot for seniors. Under the previous government, if they went out of province, they'd only get \$100 a day from OHIP — a terrible blow to the seniors. We committed to returning that to \$400 a day, which we did very quickly after we took office. I can't think of a government so terrible as to cut the seniors by 75% if they want to travel outside the province. Shame on the government of the NDP.

We've worked on "Welfare Fraud and Overpayments" and what was going on. When we took office, they were even paying many prisoners welfare. They were in the prisons, being fed and clothed and looked after, and the NDP was paying welfare to a very large number of people in our prisons. That's another one we've got under control.

"Reform Education": This is certainly one where we've made a mark, coming out with standardized report cards. We've brought out a new curriculum for the elementary panel this past year. We're also working on a curriculum for the secondary panel for this coming year. We've brought in standards for education, standards and testing for grade 3 and now into grade 6. This is starting to pay dividends just in the second year of testing of grade 3. You can see the improved results.

It's great to see that in the Toronto area they're very willing to publish the results of individual schools. I'm embarrassed that in my area, the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board won't publish the results of the various schools. They seem to want to hide them someplace or other. I don't know what the advantage of hiding is —

Interjection: Under a rock.

Mr Galt: Under a rock. They'd rather spend \$4.2 million on a new headquarters. I know the chair of that board

said a year ago, at Bill 160 time, that if that bill went through, their school board "wouldn't be allowed to buy a toothbrush," but they can spend \$4.2 million on a new headquarters. That is not the way to run education. At that point in time we didn't have our funding formula in place. That started September 1. If that had been in place, I don't think they would have been able to dig \$4.2 million out and use it that way.

I'm not going to have enough time to cover all of the issues here. We've reduced the number of school boards and that has reduced the number of trustees significantly. We've also brought it down to a reasonable amount of money that trustees receive. In Toronto it was like a full-time job. It was up to some \$50,000 that trustees were making.

Mr Gerretsen: Five thousand is more than enough for them.

Mr Galt: The member for Kingston and The Islands thinks that's just fine: spend lots of taxpayers' money. He's so supportive of spending taxpayers' money. He believes in the philosophy of spend, tax and borrow, that tax, spend and borrow vicious circle —

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Speaker: I hope you were listening to that. The member is trying to put words in my mouth that I've never said in this House before. I believe —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I don't think it has to do with parliamentary procedures, therefore, I don't see it as a point of order. The member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for agreeing with what I was saying.

I'll go on and talk about "Tuition Fees." Yes, there's been some criticism about opening up tuition fees, but as we allowed them to increase by 10%, when they went up by that amount, we were also saying that 30% had to go into a fund to help students as a student aid fund.

Mrs Boyd: On a point of order, Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please verify if we have a quorum or not.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Northumberland, you now have the floor.

2230

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I'll just slip right along here and come to the heading, "Removing Barriers to Growth." That's certainly something this government's been doing. The subheading here is "Cutting Payroll Taxes." Man, have we cut payroll taxes, the employer health tax. Check that one off. We mentioned earlier the employer health tax. That was one the Liberals brought in, I think in about 1986 or 1987, back there, but it was certainly the 34th Parliament being run by the Liberals.

"Cutting Workers' Compensation Board Premiums": Those are certainly being reduced.

Interjection.

Mr Galt: I wouldn't discuss Patti Starr. That's too embarrassing for them.

"Labour Law Reform": We can check that one off. That was one of the first things we did here in the House.

"Doing Better For Less": That's certainly been going on in this government.

"Spending Smarter": there's just no question.

"Fact-Finding Commission": We haven't quite struck a fact-finding commission.

"Less Government": We've been encouraging municipalities to less government, and certainly there have been a lot of amalgamations. We brought in the triple majority, to put it in the hands of the local municipal politicians, and that triple majority has actually been working very well. I'm sure the member for Kingston and The Islands would vouch for that, that it's been working very well in that particular area, in the county of Frontenac and in Lennox and Addington.

Mr Gerretsen: It was forced.

Mr Galt: It has certainly not been forced. The member for Kingston and The Islands thinks it was forced, but in fact it was their decision. The legislation is written such that once the triple majority has voted, then the Minister of Municipal Affairs "shall approve." So it's totally left in the hands of the local municipality to make that decision and there are some checks and balances in there.

Just getting down to the last 30 seconds, the fifth point of our platform was "A Balanced Budget Plan." I can tell you that had it not been for the programs of this province, there would not be a balanced budget in the federal government. It's this government that has stimulated the economy to create the dollars for the federal government so they could balance, and I can assure you that in the year 2000-01 the province of Ontario will have a balanced budget.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm very happy to join the debate today, that is, a calendar motion that involves having us here for the balance of the week and sitting until midnight likely this week and next week.

As we sit working here and listening to the members opposite with their prepared texts that they pull off their system, what amazes me is that there are a couple of fellows in the House — they're not in the House, they're just behind the House, these staff members who work for the Conservative Party. They're right around the corner. I can't quite see them there. I don't know their names, I don't know how much they make working for the party, all I want to know is how much time —

Mr Baird: Bill Campbell.

Mrs Pupatello: Which one is Bill Campbell? That's Bill. I'm curious to know —

The Acting Speaker: Order. I think you should address only the members of this House and nobody else. I

don't know who they are in the back. I can't see them. I'm only interested in the members here.

Mrs Papatello: Thank you, Speaker. Bill Campbell is not, in fact, in the House but he does get paid by the government of Ontario to write these apparent research notes. I don't know how many long hours or intricate computer programs were required to calculate the number of hours per bill of successive governments of Ontario. How much does Bill make for a living? Is he making \$90,000 a year? Is he making \$70,000 a year? How much time did this \$70,000-a-year man take to develop these kinds of research notes to talk about the number of minutes per bill of each successive government? Have you ever heard of it?

We're going to talk about something very relevant to the riding of Windsor-Sandwich and it has everything to do with what the government has done over the last three and a half years to introduce policy that has had an extremely negative impact on my community.

Specifically, I want to talk about children. I know that the member from the Sarnia-Lambton area will be interested in this, having visited his riding and spoken to individuals who are involved in residential beds for kids who need help. These are children who have severe emotional and behavioural problems. The Sarnia area also comes under the Windsor office of the Minister of Community and Social Services, under the same aggressive pattern across Ontario —

Mr Beaubien: They are doing very well. I met with them last week.

Mrs Papatello: The member for Lambton says they're doing very well. The fact is that this government has been on a privatization bent, and it doesn't matter what the issue is. This government is prepared to pay more to a private operator of residential beds than they are prepared to pay to a non-profit organization.

Mr Beaubien: As a matter of fact, the CCAC just returned \$400,000 back to the government. Can you believe that?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lambton.

Mrs Papatello: I find it very curious that this member would choose to heckle. Obviously, we're hitting a sore spot for some of them.

There are real problems in children's mental health agencies across Ontario. We talked about it today in the House. We brought examples in the House today, real-life examples of what our agencies and our schools and our teachers are dealing with in the classroom, not to mention the impact that these children, going without a proper level of care, are dealing with in the homes with families, with siblings, with parents, sometimes a single parent, parents who are overwhelmed by the behavioural problems of their children that they are not able to get help for.

We talked to some of our children's agencies and asked them how this has happened. What we know is that since 1993, all of these agencies right across the board received cuts. No one stopped to think what the impact would be and how many front-line workers would be lost. It was bad enough in 1993-94, but in 1995, when this govern-

ment was elected, they actually solidified the social contract cuts so that that significantly lower level remained, regardless of the impact on children.

Shortly thereafter, about a year later, this government actually launched a minister responsible for children, who rarely answers a question in the House unless it's being asked by one of her own government members. If we ask the minister a question in the House, she simply offs the question to another ministry. Here is a minister of cabinet, swearing the oath of cabinet and being a full member of cabinet, refusing to answer a question in the House that is directly related to children, which supposedly is within the purview of that ministry. We have big problems with that.

In any event, today we ask what the Minister of Community and Social Services is doing for mental health agencies, dealing with children who have waiting lists that are insurmountable. These kids instead are left in a classroom, and with this newfangled funding formula for teachers and educators out there, they are not able to provide enough support in the classroom. These kids are on waiting lists, some with problems so severe that they should be in day treatment programs, should be in residential beds. They are in no condition to be educated at this time. In fact, in Windsor the waiting list for our children's mental health agencies is 600 strong, 600 children who are not in a program they require but are instead on a waiting list.

Can we look forward to this getting any better? No, we can't. The minister launched a program that went across Ontario called Making Services Work for People. Unfortunately, it's not making services work any better. We fear that it will be even worse, because under the guise of some new restructuring of children's services, we're finding excuses and ways to do even less with less funding, always using the term, "Helping those most in need."

What that means in day-to-day practice out there in the field for people who work with children — helping those most in need means that last week we had a 12-year-old boy whose parents were desperate to get intervention for their son, but he was simply put on a waiting list. They were told there was no room for him at the treatment centres. They couldn't get help for this child until the mother found a loaded gun under the bed of this 12-year-old and called the police, who in turn called the children's aid, and they said: "We can't. We have no room."

Evidently, that child was not one of those "most in need." You wonder how desperate it needs to become before some kind of intervention is brought to bear for these families struggling to cope with children with severe emotional and behavioural problems. The system simply cannot support the number of kids who need help today.

Your government instead is going to have fewer treatment day programs and fewer residential beds, even though the needs clearly point in the other direction.

The minister today denied all of this, so we had a look at exactly what the community and social services office in the area is going to be dictating to our community. They will be dictating more cuts to residential beds and the closure of day treatment programs.

2240

What is so significant about what the minister said today is that she said, "Oh, all that money isn't going to disappear. No, no, no. It's going to be poured back into other community supports," but what is happening is that the supports are simply not there.

Today in this House we asked the minister about a particular school in the Windsor area. Four students of this school, from about grade 4 through grade 8, should be in day treatment programs but instead were in school. The community supports simply weren't there for these children. Three of these four in this one school were suicidal. One of these children went out into the playground and was trying to jump off the top of the monkey bars in a suicide attempt and was eventually sent home. When the child got home he attempted suicide again. When he attempted to do that in the family closet, he was sent into the hospital.

So now we have the hospital system in Windsor coping with the child who should have had intervention well before it ever got to that emergency state. The family tried. It wasn't as though people weren't aware this child had problems. There was nothing left in the system for our children's mental health agencies to intervene. Instead, that child went to absolute crisis before the government then saw this child get the most expensive form, hospitalization. Then that child, because of the emergency state, jumps the queue of everyone else who was waiting on that list for children's mental health services.

Every time we hear those stories about parents at their absolute wits' end because they can't cope any more, they end up falling on the doorstep of the children's aid, which at this point is so crunched and cash-starved it is turning away children who have loaded guns under their beds. Is this what we've come to?

Tonight, when we have to sit and listen to the government members talk about all the wonderful things this government has done since 1995, they simply refuse to acknowledge the fact that there are real struggling families in Ontario for whom the government has done nothing to help. These are families who are the most vulnerable. Often these are single-parent-led families. They often are the same families who are hit innumerable times by this government's change in policies. Housing policy changes have left them in the streets. The decrease in the welfare rate has affected especially children.

A children's minister with this government could actually oversee removing, taking food monies away from pregnant moms because they were on welfare, and not one government MPP can stand up in the House and say, "We've made mistakes and we've done things we wish we hadn't done". Can not one of you stand up and realize that some of your policies have been completely, in terms of damage, irreparable to Ontario?

Hospitals are another exceptional example of the kind of policy that just hasn't been thought-out clearly. You should have thought about it in advance. The worst part about what you've done to our hospitals is that it was completely preventable and completely predictable.

In the Windsor area, you can never say that the MPPs from that area didn't tell you not to do that. We told you this was exactly what was going to happen. When two of the four emergency rooms closed in the Windsor area, we told you that you did not fund the remaining two sites and you didn't expand the remaining two sites, and we knew — it was obvious — that the overflow was going to occur at the remaining two sites. We knew that the thousands and thousands of families who always went to the Windsor Western site would have nowhere to go but the Hotel Dieu site. I told you repeatedly in this House, before it happened, that the ambulances wouldn't have room to pull up to the remaining two emergency sites, and in fact that's what happened.

Shortly thereafter, I sat in the waiting room and watched at 2 am on a Saturday morning, just to see what we knew we were going to see: paramedics rolling the gurney down the ramp from Ouellette Avenue to arrive at Hotel Dieu, because the ambulance didn't have a bay it could pull into at the Hotel Dieu-Grace site. That's what happened. We knew it was going to happen. We told you it would happen. Could all of you have sat there this long and not have heard us? Did we not know that taking that many millions of dollars out of our system without reinvesting in our community was going to cause an absolute crisis?

You owed our community rehabilitation beds, chronic care beds, long-term-care beds, mental health. You owed us all of those things. You owed us home care before you sent the patients out sicker and quicker because the hospitals didn't have room for these patients. Today in the Windsor area you have individuals who stay in the recovery room longer after an operation because there isn't a bed in intensive care. Then when they get into intensive care, they actually stay longer in intensive care than they ordinarily would because there isn't a bed to move down to. After that, they stay in the bed because they know that if they have to get home care, there may not be home care available to meet the standards the doctor requires for this patient.

It's a continual move through the system, an inadequate system, a system that simply isn't allowing proper care for these patients. The worst part about is that it was entirely predictable and entirely preventable.

For us to be here tonight — we'll gladly stay till midnight. We'll stay till midnight right through until Christmas and we'll keep talking about the things that your government has neglected to do. We will keep listening until you give your partisan speech prepared by the \$90,000-a-year staffer sitting off to the side, which most of you over there make in any event. I don't know how many hours he must have spent trying to be creative and think of something you could possibly say about a calendar motion, that you'd actually do a computer tabulation of the number of minutes per bill of previous governments. It's ludicrous that they spent that kind of time.

Mrs Boyd: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Will you please check to see if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-Sandwich may continue.

Mrs Pupatello: As I was saying, a \$90,000-a-year staffer spends his time preparing these notes about a calendar motion, when you should be talking about exactly what you've done to the Windsor hospital. That's what we should talk about tonight. It's not as though any one of you could forget the horror stories.

We set up a patient health line; the number, for those who might be listening, is 254-0440. What it allows people to do, when they've had experiences with the health system in Windsor, is call. That voice mail they leave gets the message directly to the Minister of Health. That minister will hear directly from patients. What's really unfortunate is that the minister doesn't take time, evidently, to read them, because on the odd occasion that she sends me a brief note back, she's usually blaming the hospital boards, the doctors, the college, telling me that I should be reporting these people to their college or calling the OHA. Everyone is at fault except the Minister of Health and the Premier.

We all know in Windsor that you've completely botched the health system, that we had something going that was really quite tremendous. What we needed from government was a guarantee that before anything was changed the system was not going to be allowed to lose money, because we were already underfunded. But the minister at the time, Jim Wilson, in October 1997 made that fatal speech in this House in an answer to our question and said that the money was going to go somewhere else and not remain in the Windsor community. That was the death knell for us.

2250

To date, \$41 million is what our hospitals have lost that has not come back to the Windsor community. For a population of some 350,000 people in Essex County, \$41 million is an awful lot of money that could have been used for some much-needed home care, nurses etc. I have had the great misfortune of spending quite a lot of time in the hospital over the last couple of months with people I knew who were in there. What I saw myself was just like the people who called the health line and talked about what their circumstance was. We knew there weren't enough nurses on the floor. We knew the floors weren't being cleaned as often as they should be. We knew people were having their surgeries delayed. We know that on a regular basis all the elective surgery now has a greater chance of being cancelled than not, because before the patient can go under the knife that doctor must give the guarantee that there will be a bed waiting for him before he starts surgery.

We've had calls from patients who are actually on the gurney with that green outfit on, hooked up to the IV,

getting ready to be rolled into the operating room and then they hear the nurse's voice on the telephone just up the hall: "No, I am not cancelling this surgery again. If I have to cancel it, you can come down here and tell the patient yourself." This is the kind of conversation you'll hear in the corridors of the Windsor hospitals; this is what our patients will tell us: "No, no, you will not cancel this surgery again." These are people already hooked up to the IV who are turned around and sent home.

One of these individuals happened to be a diabetic. Of course, before surgery you can't eat from 12 midnight the night before, and then you go the whole day without eating in preparation for surgery. Well, the surgery was cancelled. By the time this poor fellow got home, he'd been almost 24 hours without eating, which for a diabetic is completely unsafe.

This is the kind of thing that happens in the Windsor area because this government would not listen to the CEOs of our hospitals. Our hospitals have told the ministry officials that this is going on. They've told them that the beds aren't available, that you've cut too much out of the system, that we don't have the nurses available to help them. Can you imagine? The nurses and doctors make a conscious decision that the patient stay in an intensive care bed, at about \$1,000 a day — in Windsor or Toronto or Wawa, that's how expensive they are — that the patient stay in a more expensive bed longer, because they know there aren't enough nurses on the other floors. This patient just needs more care; he doesn't need the ICU bed, but certainly isn't well enough to be left to his own devices, as is most often the case on the other floors because there just isn't enough staff around. Someone would have a bandage change begun at one moment, say at 12 noon, and at 4 o'clock it still hasn't been finished because the one nurse got called away to some other patient and couldn't get back. There just aren't enough nurses on the floor.

This is what's happening in hospitals today. It's not just happening here. Why is it that in the Sarnia area they are now wheeling adults out of surgery into the children's ward? Why is that? It's because there aren't enough beds in that hospital system in the Sarnia area, that's why. Why are we hearing in the Windsor office from Sarnia residents? Because our media markets are the same and they know we have a health interest —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Blain K. Morin (Nickel Belt): Although it's late, I still must say that it's an honour to be able to sit here tonight and represent the constituents of Nickel Belt and debate the government's House calendar motion. This motion is about the House sitting until midnight through the final sittings, even though, since the Nickel Belt by-election of October 1st, this government has forced the House to sit almost every night this entire session. It has given itself probably the most draconian set of rules to force its agenda through.

Mr Preston: He found a dipper word.

Mr Blain Morin: I found a different word.

The members talk about democracy and about public consultation. I'd like to share a little story with you about democracy, especially around the Mike Harris government. I remember my very first visit to Queen's Park, in which I was a member of the gallery. I remember making the trip from Nickel Belt, my home, because I was really concerned, as a person who represented injured workers in Ontario — I know the member smiles, because he doesn't like us talking about injured workers and he doesn't like us talking about what this government has done to injured workers in Ontario.

They talk about public input. I remember sitting in Sudbury when the committee came to Sudbury on Bill 99 — the bill of death, labour called it — and listening to this government and how they didn't want to listen to people. I remember that as a member of a trade union — and yes, I was a proud member of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and I still hold a card over at the Canadian Union of Public Employees, representing 160,000 workers in Ontario. I'm very proud to do that. I remember sitting in this gallery, because we had six days of limited public consultation in and around Bill 99 —

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): That's more than you had.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Quinte.

Mr Blain Morin: You have to listen. It's very educational here. That's an act that affects 300,000 people who are injured in the workplace each and every year.

Mr Rollins: Let's get rid of some.

Mr Blain Morin: We're going to get rid of them because Bill 99 will make it impossible for injured workers to claim workers' compensation because this government doesn't like seeing that justice. I remember, after six days of hearings and being unable to speak in Sudbury, I came here to see a motion that restricted debate, because this government didn't want to talk about the Occupational Disease Panel it eliminated. It didn't want to talk about justice around the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal and how it limits the workers' compensation tribunal only to rule on policy issues.

My friend from Hamilton Centre, our labour critic, David Christopherson, the other day in this House raised another issue about occupational disease and what this Tory government has done to workers and working people in Ontario. I still have the CEP bulletin talking about occupational cancer and disease and how it must stop in Sarnia, Ontario. Mr Christopherson came into this House, and the people from Sarnia, the widows of those families where workers had died, were here. They were talking about former employees of the Owens-Corning Canada fibreglass plant where these workers in Sarnia were dying or have died from lung cancer, kidney cancer and other forms. They've asked the Harris government to recognize those workplace carcinogens.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Simcoe East, come to order.

Mr Blain Morin: You can hear where you hit that raw nerve. They get really upset about that, really upset about

the ODP and what they've done to workers, because you talk to those injured workers in Ontario today and they say, "We won't forget."

Let me tell you, there are more than 180 workers' compensation claims filed — I must say that the president of the CEP local said, "There hasn't been another tragedy like this since Elliot Lake." Who do you think the government of the day was then? I think it was the Conservatives again, but I hear silence now. Another Elliot Lake in Sarnia, Ontario, another disaster, people dying, and we change the rules again, we limit debate, we do all this.

Mr Baird: What do your brothers and sisters think of the social contract?

Mr Blain Morin: They say "social contract." I talk to a lot of people where I'm from and the president of my union, Brother Wyman MacKinnon — can I say "brother"? That wouldn't offend you? Wyman MacKinnon says, "It's good for northern Ontario and we should stay in northern Ontario because there are times now when the weather is getting so cold that Mike Harris has to keep his hands in his own pocket instead of coming after the middle-class people in the province of Ontario." Can you believe that? That's a quote.

2300

I'm glad that I'm getting into the flow and I seem to be upsetting the government when we start talking about this.

We have not a lack of House time; we have, as we've heard from speaker after speaker tonight, an unwillingness of this government to introduce legislation early enough for public consultation.

We've talked about Bill 79 tonight. I'd like to talk about my constituency and what I'm hearing from the constituents about — I believe it was eight times you reformed. Was it eight times?

Mr Beaubien: What did Shelley say about that?

Mr Blain Morin: Shelley's not talking. Shelley's a great representative out in Sudbury East, by the way, and the former Minister of Finance, Floyd Laughren, who served the area so well.

We've talked about the assessment act; we've talked about Bill 79. Some of the letters I'm getting from constituents — when we talk about commercial property taxes, I received a letter from Virg Hotel Ltd, Mr R.J. Miller, who is very concerned about Bill 79, who is very concerned as a commercial property owner about the new rules under Bill 79 — the eighth try at it, and we're going to amend that act again — and how there's a very adverse effect on his business and what it's doing. He writes:

"As a landlord I have always advised...the regional assessment office of any changes in occupancy," at the mall, which is the Montrose Mall. "If an area was vacant and became occupied or vice versa, I would advise them...and an adjustment would be made at the end of the year to the property tax bill. It worked well for many years. In other words, I as a landlord only paid property taxes on vacant units on a residential basis...."

"Now the ruling states," since the changes of this government "that if a given unit is vacant for July, August and September and only these three months the landlord

may claim for vacancy but must advise the regional assessment office by November 1, to claim vacancy for the coming year only."

He talks about how unfair that is: "What the government is saying [is] that they want the landlord to pay the new business tax on commercial property no matter what."

He talks about the effects this new legislation has had on him: "I have 30 leasable units and as most leases are due every three or five years and 50% do not renew their lease, I have an average of four units per year to re-lease. It takes about an average of five months for a vacant unit to be re-leased."

This new legislation has just cost this property owner in Sudbury \$5,000 a year. He asks how you can stay in business with this legislation, another draconian piece of legislation that this government still has not got right.

I talk with great interest in my constituency to the reeve of Chapleau. They conducted a study because they know this government likes studies and they know we have to put forward logical arguments. We talked about the downloading and the impact of that downloading in northern Ontario. Northern Ontario is a lot different than the communities in southern Ontario because we don't have the population base there. We don't have the tax base. The reeve of Chapleau, with whom we've talked on countless occasions, is really concerned about Bill 79. Reeve Freeborn gives us a copy of the text and of the study. The study is conducted by KPMG, and it says that northern Ontario municipalities, including the district of Sudbury, are constantly far worse off in terms of the financial impact of downloading, because of the process, when compared to municipalities in other parts of Ontario.

The factors which contribute to that: The adverse effect of downloading on northern Ontario and the regions and the municipalities include higher costs associated with services being transferred from the province when compared to the remainder of the province, a greater reliance on municipal support grants than other municipalities located elsewhere in the province and lower-than-average education property tax revenue available to offset the costs of those transferred services.

We hear this government saying: "We gave you the tool box. The tool box had all the tools. You didn't have to raise property taxes. That's the reason for Bill 79, because we found out when we reassessed property tax across this province they went up so high."

The town of Chapleau, which is in my constituency of Nickel Belt, didn't raise taxes. In fact, they followed this government's example of what to do.

Let me give some merit to what this report is saying, because it says policing alone in Chapleau will cost a total of \$576,000. The town's share of that policing is \$110,000. It applied for the one-time funding under the special circumstances fund and received \$94,000. Therefore, even under Mike Harris's math, there is still a \$16,000 shortfall for the town and the residents of Chapleau, Ontario, in my riding of Nickel Belt to pick up. That's why, even after eight times, northern municipalities

are still not happy with the haphazard revisions this government has put forth and continues to put forth because they can't get it right.

I'd like to read also from the regional municipality of Sudbury, which is also really concerned. They passed a resolution. I talked to the regional chair on the weekend, Mr Mazzucca, and I had the opportunity to talk to him at a Christmas dinner. I asked him how he felt about Bill 79. He said basically, if you're from northern Ontario, and I quote, "You're screwed."

Even the council of the regional municipality of Sudbury passed a resolution about Bill 79 and the higher property taxes, especially how it's hitting people in northern Ontario. I know this government doesn't believe there is much more province after Parry Sound, but the resolution, which was unanimously passed, said:

"Whereas the provincial government introduced the Ontario fair assessment system for 1998, and the future taxation year is based on the current value assessment; and

"Whereas the proposed legislation is a broad-brush approach that is not applicable to all municipalities...." I want to make sure the government heard that: It's a broad-brush approach that is not applicable to all municipalities.

Let me try to give you the definition of that. It means the government obviously does not want to understand the plight of northern municipalities, because the ministers in this government continue to talk and we continue to see legislation like Bill 79 come forward, which is going to totally devastate the communities in my riding of Nickel Belt. This government, with its arrogance, as on the day I was up in the House on Bill 99 trying to figure out why they didn't want to talk about destroying the ODP, don't care. They don't want to listen to people in northern Ontario.

It's not only that. It's a wide variety of issues. For example, today I had the opportunity in my constituency, in the community of Rayside-Balfour, to talk to the community health centre. What they do is they talk and they help us, especially around funding in underserved areas with physicians. They provide an essential service to our community in providing francophone services to the people of Rayside-Balfour and to the people of Valley East.

I know Mr Laughren, and I know the government wants me to give equal billing to my caucus member Ms Martel, helped secure permanent resources for the centre in October 1997 for both Rayside-Balfour and Valley East. They've attached the present budget. But the funny thing is that even though we've secured the funding and even though the government has seen the need for it, the government put a freeze on the development of any new community health centre or expansion for the existing ones.

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In our community, which is an underserved area, in these cases they've never received any kind of funding for things like rent, phones, postage, supplies, cleaning, computers etc. Thank goodness for the *caisse populaire* in

the area that has allowed the community health centres to use part of their building at no charge, because goodness knows the Mike Harris Tories haven't helped and haven't assisted in the area. We don't understand.

They want the House to sit until midnight because they've dropped the ball on certain issues. A couple of interesting things: A prime example is Bill 82, which is the enhanced enforcement bill. We should give credit where credit is due. Mr Wildman from Algoma was pretty well the author of that piece of legislation. But we heard the minister the other day talk about the enforcement. He said, "With the enforcement, we really have some teeth behind Mr Wildman's bill."

We asked the question, and we still haven't heard the answer: "But what about enforcement? When you lay off all these public sector employees, where are you going to get the enforcement?" He said: "Oh, we're not going to lay off public sector employees. We're going to keep the enforcement in place."

Yet if you look at the article in the Toronto Star, it says, "Less is more for the Tories," and the Mike Harris Tories say they are thinking of dumping another 13,500 public servants, on top of the 16,500 they've already said goodbye to.

Just to follow up and conclude, I see an interesting article in the Sudbury Star of Friday, December 4, where it says: "Tories don't care about ordinary folk." It was written by Judy Sumner and Brian Dumontelle from Capreol.

"Yet another Progressive Conservative pre-election leaflet arrived in our mail last week. This one glorified the health care policies of the Harris government."

They go on to say: "Do they think we are stupid?"

"Do they think that a glossy leaflet will stop us from noticing the long waits in hospital emergency rooms, the lack of staff in nursing homes, the increasing number of ordinary families needing food banks and threats of schools closing schools for lack of education funding?"

The message is: Stop the commercials. We know the cuts to education and health care and the increases in tuition fees for university students are drastic, but put that \$48 million back into the communities where it belongs.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to rise tonight and to follow some of my colleagues on this discussion about the calendar motion.

I was moved to think about a couple of things when the member for Windsor-Sandwich was up, the win-win committee member from Windsor, who I believe when she was on that committee actually advocated the closing of a hospital. She always neglects to remember that, but when she was on that committee that's what they did.

Mrs Pupatello: You don't get away with that crap in the House, Bart. Go back to Niagara and take care of your hospitals.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, come to order.

Mr Maves: We're touching a raw nerve. The member opposite doesn't like to hear about that.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Member for Windsor-Sandwich, I'll not warn you again.

Member for Niagara Falls.

Mrs Pupatello: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like you to rule on whether or not members opposite are entitled to come in the House and actually give information that is completely inaccurate.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Windsor-Sandwich knows the rules of debate much better than to try to make that into a point of order.

The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: I know the good member for Northumberland gave a wonderful 20-minute speech where he ad libbed the whole thing. He worked very hard at discussing some of the things that have happened over the past three years. He didn't have a single note in front of him. He referred to the Common Sense Revolution and a little bit of the red book but didn't have a single note in front of him.

The member opposite, without watching him, immediately jumped to her feet and said, "He spoke from a prepared text." Nothing could be further from the truth. "The prepared text," she said, "came from the staff in the backrooms." This is one of these silly myths that the Liberals have continued to propagate for three and a half years now, this feeling that the Conservative Party and the government of Ontario have all this staff and nobody else over here does any thinking or any writing of their own materials or any of their own speech-making. It's as if the Liberal Party, the opposition party, has no staff, but we know better.

For instance, the "whiz kid" term they use, where did that come from? Let's just talk about some of the Liberal staff. You know what? It's actually remarkable how many staff they have, and I'd love to know who the heck these people are. Where are their offices? These are secret people and it seems like whiz kids.

Matt Maychak, the principal secretary to Dalton McGuinty — it was Dalton McGuinty's brother initially and then the public said, "No, Dalton, you shouldn't be hiring relatives, so you'd better move him along." I don't think Matt Maychak has ever been elected a member, yet he's making decisions, he's telling the Liberals what policy they should follow or what policy they shouldn't follow, or maybe he's telling them, "Don't make policy at all." I think that's Matt Maychak.

Monique Smith, there's another one. I don't remember her holding elected office, but she's running the show over there. We're not sure, but we think that she initiated the term "the backroom boys." We're not sure, but we know that these members sure didn't come up with it. We think Monique did. Who else have they got back there?

Mr Baird: How much money does she make? How come that's not public?

Mr Maves: I don't have that. They're probably pretty close to \$100,000 or something like that. We're not sure, but maybe we should check into that. The member makes a good point.

Rod MacDonald, there's another one. Doug Lauriault, Kelly Legris — I think we all know Kelly; Kelly has been there a long time — Bob Lopinski, Gordon Cobb, Lisa Clements, Elaine Flis, June Bonvivere.

Mr Baird: How many do they have? All those spin doctors.

Mr Maves: It goes on. Duncan Fulton — every time the Liberal Party puts out a press release, at the bottom of the press release it doesn't say to contact one of the MPPs; it usually says, "Contact Duncan Fulton." That's the spin doctor. I think he came up with that term "spin doctor," or he might have been the one who came up with the term "prepared text," which they've been told to use for years and years now.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Speaker: I would seriously request the member to stop naming these individuals because I know they'll all be in tomorrow morning looking for a raise. They are not whiz kids. They are hard-working, dedicated people, but they're not whiz kids.

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): We know they're not whiz kids.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: I'm sorry Mr Gerretsen doesn't have a very high opinion of the staff that he has. They may all be quite clever and they might take offence at your saying they're not whiz kids.

The member for Guelph reminds me. Matt Maychak is the guy who came up with the leader's new haircut. I think he has connections with the barber downstairs. I'm not sure, but I'm told that he's the brains behind the new haircut.

Who else is there? There are more, folks. There are a lot more people here. In community outreach there are just tons of these people.

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Mr Galt: These are all Liberals?

Mr Maves: All Liberals: Rod MacDonald, Ethel Forester, Rod Cumming, Steven Del Duca, Andrew Lang, Cameron Summers, Mike Watcher. It goes on and on: Hans Feldmann, David Harvey, Monica Testa, Maria Paez-Victor, Ann Wales, Christine Bome. It's unbelievable.

The Liberals want people to believe that only the government of Ontario, only the PC Party —

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Speaker: One of the names that the member mentioned is incorrect. It's pronounced Christine "Bomay," not Christine —

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: I recognize that I'm touching a nerve with the members opposite. They don't like it revealed that they have all of this very expensive staff.

Mr Baird: Merchants of fear.

Mr Maves: Merchants of fear, as the member for Nepean tells me.

Communication services: A lot of the stuff that gets put out by the opposition party, all of the slick PR they put out there, forces us to do all kinds of communications to correct the record for the people of Ontario; all of the myths they create.

Mr Baird: Who are these people? Who's the PR flak?

Mr Maves: My understanding is that Bob Lopinski does a lot of this. He sends it over to Mike Bonazza, who makes sure all this gets printed up, and then Mike send it down to Pierre Moutier and David Innes and they take care of getting it all prepared. Then it gets sent out on taxpayers' dollars.

There is a note we've been given about Dalton McGuinty —

Mr Galt: Where is Brenda? Is Brenda's name there?

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I want order. I realize it's getting late at night and you may be restless, but the member for Niagara Falls has the floor and I want to hear him. I wish you would let him have it. The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: Just going back again —

Mr Galt: We want to know about Brenda. How much did Brenda get paid for the ad?

Mr Maves: We're not sure about that. We can look that up.

There's an article saying, "McGuinty acknowledges there has been 'some refocusing' of his image." It talks about the "43-year-old has been working on his image in the two years since he became Liberal leader. The gangster-like dark shirts have been replaced with paler shades." Of course, some of the highly paid staff over there would say, "Get rid of those gangster-like shirts," and we can understand that. They like his new haircut.

It goes on and on. There's more staff. There's just reams of it, and I can go on and on.

Mr Baird: The merchants of fear.

Mr Maves: They are. It appears that that's the case, and we've talked about it. We're now discovering who is in those backrooms and how much money they're getting paid and all the spin-doctoring they're doing. There are only usually six or seven of them in the backroom right here in the backstage for the Liberals.

The member for Guelph has handed me an article in the Ottawa Citizen. It's called "Style."

"Ontario Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty, a babe? Yes, according to party polls suggesting Mr McGuinty is much more attractive to women than is Mr Harris.

"Why? Start with the fact that he's not well-known among voters, who possess little on which to base an impression other than his youth and hip haircut."

The haircut has gone a long way. It was high-priced information, high-priced advice, but that haircut appears to have gone a long way.

The member for Windsor-Sandwich is upset, and I understand why. I remember after the election they had a little retreat. I just quote from an article here. I'm quoting from an article —

Mr Galt: Where was that retreat? What did it cost them?

Mr Maves: I'm not sure where they went. It was at a swank southwestern Ontario resort town, though. It was just after the Tory landslide. Outside the meetings some Liberals expressed concerns that the party would be handicapped in opposition by a campaign platform that advocated many of the things the Tories are now doing. "We are all singing from the same song sheet," said rookie member Sandra Pupatello of Windsor. 'How can we go in guns blazing when we would've been doing the same thing?'"

Mrs Pupatello: You guys are desperate over there.

Mr Maves: On a night like tonight it's unusual that we would actually be here to 12. We thought we had an understanding with the opposition Liberals to come in here tonight, do a little bit of debate about this calendar motion, which is what we're spending till midnight debating, and then we would move on to more —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: It's not in order to do any heckling, but certainly not from anyone else's seat. The chair recognizes the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: We thought we would perhaps be moving on to other business tonight, or finishing up before midnight so we could all be well rested and have more serious debate tomorrow, but lo and behold, 8 o'clock comes and the opposition party seems to break its promises and carry on and on. It's decided, "We're going to keep everyone here to midnight tonight to debate this motion." It's just another broken promise.

That shouldn't really surprise anyone at home because you can look back at the history of the Liberal Party and look at all the broken promises.

Back in the 1974 election, they had the famous wage and price flip-flop.

In 1980, the gas tax: They went crazy about Mr Clark's government, on his proposal about the gas tax. They won the election in 1980. They brought it in; they brought in their own. They completely flipped.

In 1988, the free trade election: They were completely opposed to free trade, the worst worst thing that was ever going to happen. When they got into office in 1993, they enhanced it. In 1993 they were against NAFTA, the North American free trade agreement. What did they do when they got in office? They signed it.

What else? Of course, let's not forget the most famous of all, the GST promise during the 1993 election: "We'll get rid of that. You can trust us." It's 1998 and it's still there.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is it not imperative that in the provincial House we talk about provincial matters? Everything this member has talked about in the last 10 minutes deals with federal matters or matters that are well beyond the means of this House.

Would you please direct the member to stay on the point —

The Deputy Speaker: I was going to remind the member that it is the House calendar motion. It allows for a little latitude because some speakers are bringing in the things that they think may have to be used because of the motion going till midnight. There has been some latitude. With all deference, I want to indicate to you that I don't think the speaker from Niagara Falls is outside of the bounds that I have experienced.

Mr Gerretsen: Speaker, if I may —

The Deputy Speaker: No.

Mr Gerretsen: It's on a different point.

The Deputy Speaker: No, I'm sorry. I might think you were arguing with the chair if you did something like that. The chair recognizes the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: We just talked about GST.

Helicopters: The federal PCs said it was urgent. The military said it was urgent. They said helicopters would fall out of the sky if nothing was done. The Liberals ran against it. They said, "No way, not a nickel." Now what are they doing? Buying helicopters, a little bit late. They're already dropping out of the sky and people are dying.

What else? The Pearson airport: They were totally against the Pearson airport. What's going ahead now? Pearson expansion.

They want to talk about their own record. They want to talk about provincial politics. I'm happy to talk about that too. I remember when in the 1990 election they campaigned and said, "The books are balanced." It was the whole campaign, "The books are balanced." The poor NDP comes in and they find out they've got a \$3-billion deficit. Not only that, but the Liberals before them have just put expenditure levels up so high that when the recession hit, they didn't have the courage to pull back and reduce spending. In fact they thought they'd increase spending dramatically over the first couple of years. They did even worse. But the Liberals left them with the mess.

Let's just talk about the last election, 1995. Let's talk about some of those Liberal red book promises, things they said they'd do if they got into office. They were going to cut spending by more than \$4 billion. That's right there in the Liberal red book. Every single expenditure reduction we've had in this government, they've opposed.

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Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know that what the member has to say is important, to the member anyway. There ought to be enough members in the House to listen to him. I do not believe that at this point in time we have a quorum in the House. I would like you to check, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The chair recognizes the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: They also said in the Liberal red book that they would cut taxes by 5%. They've opposed the tax cut and every other tax cut we've brought in since we've been here. They say one thing in the election and they do something totally opposite.

Eliminate welfare fraud: Everything we've advocated to eliminate welfare fraud, they've opposed.

Cutting political staff: I think I just demonstrated clearly that they certainly haven't cut political staff. The amount of political staff they have unbelievable. I think I just showed that clearly.

Reducing the small business corporate tax rate: We've introduced that. They were up in arms against it. "How can you do that?" they said. They ran on that.

It's just the history. It goes on over and over. You can read the red book.

Freeze WCB rates paid by employers: We did that. They complained. We said we'd do better. We've reduced them by nearly 20% now. They complain about that.

Change the makeup of the WCB board of directors to make it less partisan and more accountable to a wider range of stakeholders, the people of Ontario: I sat in the public hearings. Both those parties completely opposed that change.

They run on one thing; they do another. It's the history of the party at all levels: at the federal level, at provincial levels, over and over again. We could continue to go through this red book and find all of these promises. When we brought those promises in, they just voted against them.

You know what? I guess they say it best. I just read the quote from the member from Windsor about: "We're singing from the same song sheet. How can we go in guns blazing as an opposition when we would've been doing the same thing?" But I think there's even a better quote from Windsor-Walkerville MPP, Dwight Duncan.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Oh, not him; he ran for the leadership.

Mr Maves: He did run for the leadership.

Mr O'Toole: What did he say then?

Mr Maves: This is what he said about his own party, "We've been far too fuzzy for far too long." He says more: "We're going to have to someday decide what we stand for and then stand for it. We have some serious navel gazing to do."

I suggest that navel gazing hasn't occurred yet because every day a member of that opposition gets up and announces a new policy. The poor leader, Mr McGuinty, winces and says, "Oh, I didn't know I was going to promise that." Then another one announces another policy, "I didn't know I was going to do that." They've really got to get it together. Whatever you say, here's what they've established over the years: Whatever they tell you they're going to do, they probably won't do it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I feel as though I should begin tonight with an apology to all of the staff members, both present in the assembly chambers and back in our offices, for the fact that we are continuing this

debate at some length, as it is now 11:30 at night. I make the apology not because they didn't expect to be here when they came in to work today, because we were scheduled to sit until midnight, but because when I came into the House earlier this evening there was certainly some discussion going on that might have led to some expectation that the House would not be sitting this late in the evening.

Contrary to what the member for Niagara Falls has said, however, the discussion that was going at the point when I came into the House this evening was on the part of government members, who were hoping that we would all agree to simply not take part in the debate and that if that was the case, we wouldn't be moving on to other business, as the member for Niagara Falls has suggested.

There was no other business before us that the government had brought forward. The government had nothing else on the agenda tonight. The government members wanted to negotiate a chance to go home. Well, we've chosen to stay and debate. To the staff, who are weary and want to go home, I apologize if their hopes were raised that perhaps the House would have adjourned earlier in the evening.

I've chosen to stay and participate in the debate at this late hour of the evening because I actually feel it's important to say some things about —

Mr Wettlaufer: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member points out that she thinks it's hideous that the government members wanted to go home early. I don't recall the members of the government saying that we wanted to go home early, but I do notice that there are only two Liberals in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order, and indeed it's not parliamentary to point out that members aren't here. The member for Fort William.

Mrs McLeod: We of course have had a member here to participate in the debate each time it was our turn to participate, according to the rules of the House, nor have I suggested that anything was hideous.

Mr Galt: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think her comments earlier about the Conservatives wanting to leave early are quite serious. In fact, it really was an agreement that the opposition parties were only going to put up one or two speakers for a few minutes. That was the agreement, that we were going to be out of here by 7 or 7:30 at the very latest, when in fact they just kept putting up speaker after speaker after speaker and we're going on to midnight.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, that is not a point of order, you're quite correct, nor was there any agreement on the part of this caucus to limit the number of speakers.

What is at issue here is a motion that I would actually like to speak to. There is a government motion that this House sit next week. I want to speak in favour of a portion of the motion and express my concerns about another portion of the motion, the portion that says we will sit until midnight next week. I'll come back to why I am supportive of one part but have reservations about the other part.

I'm very supportive of us being here next week. In fact, I was delighted when we were going to be able to extend the session to have at least four more sitting days with question periods. I can tell you, I wish we had a lot more question periods. This fall session seems to have been very short, shortened with both the constituency week and then another week, quite unusual to take off, for doing committees. What that has meant to us in our caucus is that we have a whole raft of issues that we know are of concern to people across this province, that we have wanted to raise to do our job of holding this government accountable, to seek answers from the government ministers, although admittedly we never get them, and we simply have not had enough opportunity to raise all of the issues.

I hold the position of education critic, and I just want to indicate why I'm glad we're coming back next week: because I may have an opportunity to get on to question period some of the issues that I have been wanting to raise.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, and I'm sure you'll rule that this is a point of order: I hope the member opposite is also going to take the time to address some of the issues raised by the member for Niagara Falls, and to that end, I don't believe there's a quorum present. I wonder if you'd be kind enough to check.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.
The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Fort William.

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Mrs McLeod: I was about to say that I'm looking forward to the sessions next week in the hopes of being able to raise a number of the issues that, as education critic, I feel the need to raise before the end of this session. I have, for example, been extremely concerned about the statements that were made by the Premier that suggested that students didn't need to worry about the escalating debt they're experiencing because of deregulated tuition fees and tuition fee increases. In fact, the Premier said they didn't need to worry about it because having a debt like that just meant they had to postpone buying their BMW for another year.

I note that the Premier has subsequently, on the defensive about having made that statement, tried to claim that the average debt load for students was only about \$15,000. We want to have an opportunity to question the Premier about the fact that that is not considering the kinds of debt sanctioned by government before there can be any loan forgiveness, which leads any student who requires the maximum amount of support available with a minimum debt of \$28,000 after four years of university. Then you add on to that, for any student going into a graduate program or a professional program, the tremendous debt which deregulation has brought. So that's one of

the issues we'd like to raise and I hope we'll have an opportunity.

I want to raise the issue of school closures, which of course did get quite a lot of attention earlier in the session. The government would like to think that this issue is over and done with, but what the government hasn't talked a lot about is the fact that they still are requiring every school board to have 100% occupancy of all their schools and close any space which is in excess of that 100% occupancy before any school board can get any money to build new schools in a new area, an area of enrolment growth.

I left the House for about half an hour this evening to take a phone call from a parent who was, at that point, meeting with a group of parents trying to figure out why their school is still faced with closure, given this government's intention, the statement of the Premier, that no school would now have to close. So I hope we'll have an opportunity to raise some very specific questions about the current policies that are forcing school closures on the part of this government.

I'm looking forward to having an opportunity to raise the fact that the government is forcing some school boards into attempting to charge parents mandatory fees for required services, certainly a first step into kinds of privatization that says, let those who can afford it pay for the kinds of services that traditionally we have provided free of charge to all students. I hope I'll have an opportunity to raise that issue.

I'm most anxious to get back to the issue, before the end of the session, about mould in portables. I was present at the meeting at which a former Minister of Education, now one of the members from Mississauga, assured all the parents present at this forum that the money was coming from his own government. He absolutely assured them. He said, "Trust me, the money will come to replace the mouldy portables in the Peel area." But as yet, there's still no money to replace the mouldy portables, so I hope we'll be able to get some answers to that before the House adjourns at the end of next week.

I'm hoping that before the end of the session we'll get more opportunities to raise the issue of this so-called secondary reform which a number of members on the other side of the House have raised tonight, because what I'm hearing over and over again from secondary school teachers is the question, "Where is the curriculum?" It is now almost the middle of December. The curriculum was supposed to have been announced in November. Nobody has seen it yet, except for some draft documents that were leaked and are on the Internet.

The curriculum is apparently not going to be released until March or April. Textbook producers are now wondering if they should be producing textbooks based on draft curriculum so we don't get caught in the kind of fiasco we had with the elementary school curriculum last year when there were no textbooks available and they had to be rushed into print and, as a result, we ended up with erasable texts. There's a lot of concern that that's exactly

where we're heading with secondary schools come this winter and spring.

I'm very much hoping that we'll get a chance to ask the Minister of Education exactly when we are going to see the secondary school curriculum and how he is going to avoid the kind of fiasco with no textbooks to support a new curriculum. I really, truly hope that the Minister of Education doesn't think that all we have to do is book a photographer early so we can make sure we get the photo opportunities on the secondary school textbooks and reform.

One of the issues I would like to raise and I just haven't been able to get on the agenda —

Mr Galt: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It was interesting the member opposite mentioned photo opportunities for books for the secondary panel. She should note that same suggestion was there for the elementary books. They got totally sucked in, they went out and campaigned and helped us advertise the books when they came in. We really appreciate that, and I just wanted to recognize her for it.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Fort William.

Mrs McLeod: I certainly appreciate the member's segue into my next issue of concern which, again, there hasn't been an opportunity to raise in this short session. That's the most recent advertising brochure, part of the \$50-million advertising blitz that this government has undertaken.

Of course, as education critic, the one that I wanted to raise, and I don't mind drawing attention to it, I tell the member opposite, I'd be happy to bring it in, I say to the member for Northumberland, because there's a 1-800 number at the bottom of this very glossy advertising brochure. The 1-800 number says, "Call now for more information," and I had several constituents who called in an earnest attempt to get more information from this very glossy advertising brochure.

When they actually asked questions, they were told that they couldn't be given any answers because the people who were answering the telephones were hired on contract by the government to answer the phones. All they could do was write down what the individuals wanted to ask in the expectation that maybe someday there would be a response from the government. People were feeling very disgruntled, not only about the glossy advertising brochure but about the lack of response from the 1-800 number which promised information. I'm mindful of the Premier saying, "We only want to use our dollars for truth in advertising." That's one of those areas of something less than truth in advertising that I would have liked to raise.

I'm also women's issues critic, and there are a number of issues there I was hoping I'd have an opportunity to raise before the session ends, one of them being the fact that this government is completely and absolutely derelict in making its payments under the pay equity plan, which is forcing a great many community agencies into deficit situations. I'm hoping there will be an opportunity to raise that issue.

I also have a number of local issues that I would like to raise. Unfortunately, there has been so much chaos in education and so many concerns affecting issues of concern to women that I haven't been able to get to many of my local issues. I'd like to have more opportunity to raise the concerns of the business improvement group that I met with last Thursday morning who are very concerned about the taxation issue which has been mentioned a number of times tonight.

I'd like to raise the concerns that came from the children's —

Mr O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the House is discussing the House calendar motion. I was wondering, if I reflect back, listening to the endless debate here tonight, if I heard the member for Kingston and The Islands say correctly, was it \$6 billion that the federal Liberals removed from health care, or was it \$19 billion?

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order but I've already ruled because of the type of motion it is that the member is well within the bounds of the motion.

2350

Mr Gerretsen: On a further point of order, Mr Speaker: The member from Durham just made a statement alleging that I made a statement in the House tonight, a statement which was never made. If there's anything we should be —

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm not going there at this time of night. The Chair recognizes the member for Fort William.

Mrs McLeod: I think I've been here too long. I actually have this propensity to take the debates in this place somewhat seriously and feel as though this is time that should be spent on issues of public concern, so I find the dilatory approach of the members opposite somewhat distressing. Blame that on age, I guess. I do speak to the motion, as the member for Durham East might have known if he had been here at the outset of my speech, because I'm identifying the reasons for my support of the government's motion that we sit next week.

I was also outlining my hope that we will be able to sit longer, and I will very shortly conclude with that because I'm hoping we'll come back in the winter so that we will have many more opportunities to raise the issues. I might be able to raise issues not only of concern to the education community, of concern to women's groups but of concern to my local riding, things like the lack of mental health services, the lack of planning, the fact that the Minister of Health has not told us whether there is going to be a mental health agency as the commissioner has recommended or what the alternative would be.

I'd like to raise the issue of the children's mental health centres which have put in proposals for additional funding because of an increased waiting list and the fact that they can't meet the urgent needs of children and families who need support and help.

I certainly want to come back and raise the issue of the northern health travel grant, which is an issue we raised earlier. I have a constituent who has used up almost all of his retirement pension getting medically necessary care because the northern health travel grant does not adequately compensate for his need to travel outside of our area to get medically necessary care. Those are just some of the issues I hope to have an opportunity to raise in question period.

Mr Speaker, you will know, and I indicated at the beginning, that while I support the motion to extend our sitting I have some caution, some conditions about the midnight sittings. I'm not reluctant to sit until midnight. Obviously, I'm prepared to be here and to be the wrap-up speaker, I suspect, this evening. But I do fault the government for the actions that they took in allowing our evening sittings to be considered to be full days of this Legislature.

What that does, and this is unprecedented, normally when the House sits in evening sessions it's a continuation of the session of that day. This government decided that the evening sessions would constitute a new day, the only place in the world where we have two days in one 24-hour period. There's no evening in this Legislature, which means, of course, that we don't have a question period. The government can ram this legislation through in half the time with half the question period. We have been in evening sessions since September, which has allowed the government to claim that they're having much more debate on issues, but they're having very few question periods for the amount of debate time that this House has had.

I think we need to come back next week because of our major pieces of legislation. I wish that those major pieces of legislation, the non-act for the disabled, which needs to have serious and extensive debate in this House, had been on our agenda tonight when we've had some five hours of debate, but I suspect the government will bring it in when we have a two-and-a-half-hour afternoon session, and then they'll bring in a time allocation motion and cut off debate.

I think they'll do the same thing with the Child and Family Services Act, an act which in many ways we support but we want an opportunity in debate to raise concerns about the fact that this government has promised financial resources to our children's aid societies, which don't have enough resources to meet the legal mandate that they currently hold, but has not flowed any of those monies.

We want to debate the act that has been brought forward. We want to raise some concerns with the act although, in general, we support its direction, but we also want to make sure that there is not a great hypocrisy being perpetuated on the part of a government that promises money to provide for the children's aid societies to meet

their legal mandate, extends the legal mandate but never actually flows the additional dollars that it needs to carry out that mandate.

That certainly is a debate we want to have. I guess my question, if the government House leader were here, would be, are you going to get some of these five-hour sessions as we sit until midnight next week to debate the non-act for the disabled and the Children and Family Services Act amendments, both of which require extensive debate, or are you going to slot those into the shortened afternoon sessions, when we only have two and a half hours at best, and are you then going to bring in a time allocation motion before the end of the session? What are we going to be looking at in terms of the kind of debate that's needed?

I regret the fact that we've now spent five hours on a debate on a motion to extend our sittings when we have important pieces of legislation that deserve five hours' debate, that the government could have brought forward and we could have been debating these issues tonight. This motion could have been on the afternoon agenda today, we could have had the debate, we could have had the passage of the motion, we could have set up for the extended hours and we could have moved on indeed to serious issues of legislative urgency tonight.

I believe we need to come back next week, which is why I will be supporting the motion. I regret the fact that we can't have question periods in our evening sessions, since they constitute full-day sessions. I suggest very seriously that if this House is prepared to do justice to the public concerns and the public business and to have full consideration of the kinds of important legislative issues that are before this House, then we must come back not only next week but in January and in February and in March so that, day by day, we can debate the issues and raise questions and hold this government accountable.

What this government wants more than anything else is to finish its agenda by the end of next week with its midnight sittings and not come back again until perhaps the end of March. This government does not like to be in this place being held accountable. That's why they've curtailed question period, that's why we will adjourn at the end of next week and perhaps not come back till March.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Turnbull has moved government notice of motion number 44. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? It is carried.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? It is carried.

It being almost 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2359.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic	Hamilton East / -Est	L	
Arnott, Ted	Wellington	PC	parliamentary assistant (Small Business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Baird, John R.	Nepean	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Barrett, Toby	Norfolk	PC	
Bartolucci, Rick	Sudbury	L	
Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel	St Andrew-St Patrick	PC	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Beaubien, Marcel	Lambton	PC	
Bisson, Gilles	Cochrane South / -Sud	ND	deputy New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Boushy, Dave	Sarnia	PC	
Boyd, Marion	London Centre / -Centre	ND	
Bradley, James J.	St Catharines	L	deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Brown, Jim	Scarborough West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services correctionnels
Brown, Michael A.	Algoma-Manitoulin	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Caplan, David	Oriole	L	
Carr, Gary	Oakville South / -Sud	PC	
Carroll, Jack	Chatham-Kent	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Castrilli, Annamarie	Downsview	L	
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	ND	
Chudleigh, Ted	Halton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn	Riverdale	ND	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Cleary, John C.	Cornwall	L	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony	Brampton South / -Sud	PC	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Colle, Mike	Oakwood	L	
Conway, Sean G.	Renfrew North / -Nord	L	
Cordiano, Joseph	Lawrence	L	
Crozier, Bruce	Essex South / -Sud	L	
Cullen, Alex	Ottawa West / -Ouest	ND	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne	London North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin	Scarborough North / -Nord	L	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Danford, Harry	Hastings-Peterborough	PC	parliamentary assistant (Agriculture and Food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
DeFaria, Carl	Mississauga East / -Est	PC	
Doyle, Ed	Wentworth East / -Est	PC	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Dwight	Windsor-Walkerville	L	
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet	Durham West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Elliott, Brenda	Guelph	PC	
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.	Parry Sound	PC	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Fisher, Barbara	Bruce	PC	parliamentary assistant (Rural Affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjointe parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim	Durham Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Ford, Douglas B.	Etobicoke-Humber	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Fox, Gary	Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward- Lennox-Hastings-Sud	PC	
Froese, Tom	St Catharines-Brock	PC	parliamentary assistant (Colleges and Universities) to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire (secteur collèges et universités) du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Galt, Doug	Northumberland	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Environnement
Gerretsen, John	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	L	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Gilchrist, Steve	Scarborough East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Grandmaître, Bernard	Ottawa East / -Est	L	
Gravelle, Michael	Port Arthur	L	
Grimmett, Bill	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ottawa-Rideau	PC	
Hampton, Howard	Rainy River	ND	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie	Oxford	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles	Willowdale	PC	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.	Nipissing	PC	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John	Etobicoke-Rexdale	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris	Victoria-Haliburton	PC	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, deputy government House leader / Président du Conseil de gestion, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, vice- leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Hoy, Pat	Essex-Kent	L	
Hudak, Tim	Niagara South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron	Burlington South / -Sud	PC	Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Soins de longue durée, ministre délégué aux affaires des personnes âgées
Johns, Helen	Huron	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Johnson, Bert	Perth	PC	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice- Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Johnson, Hon / L'hon David	Don Mills	PC	Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Johnson, Ron	Brantford	PC	
Jordan, W. Leo	Lanark-Renfrew	PC	parliamentary assistant (Tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Kells, Morley	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	PC	
Kennedy, Gerard	York South / -Sud	L	
Klees, Frank	York-Mackenzie	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kormos, Peter	Welland-Thorold	ND	
Kwinter, Monte	Wilson Heights	L	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	L	
Lankin, Frances	Beaches-Woodbine	ND	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Leach, Hon / L'hon Al	St George-St David	PC	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Leadston, Gary L.	Kitchener-Wilmot	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Lessard, Wayne	Windsor-Riverside	ND	
Marchese, Rosario	Fort York	ND	
Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret	Mississauga South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Martel, Shelley	Sudbury East / -Est	ND	
Martin, Tony	Sault Ste Marie	ND	deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Martiniuk, Gerry	Cambridge	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire du procureur général
Maves, Bart	Niagara Falls	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Travail
McGuinty, Dalton	Ottawa South / -Sud	L	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLean, Allan K.	Simcoe East / -Est	PC	
McLeod, Lyn	Fort William	L	
Miclash, Frank	Kenora	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Morin, Blain K.	Nickel Belt	ND	
Morin, Gilles E.	Carleton East / -Est	L	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Munro, Julia	Durham-York	PC	
Murdoch, Bill	Grey-Owen Sound	PC	
Mushinski, Marilyn	Scarborough-Ellesmere	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre
Newman, Dan	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
North, Peter	Elgin	Ind	
O'Toole, John R.	Durham East / -Est	PC	
Ouellette, Jerry J.	Oshawa	PC	
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al	York Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Parker, John L.	York East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Patten, Richard	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	L	
Pettit, Trevor	Hamilton Mountain	PC	
Phillips, Gerry	Scarborough-Agincourt	L	
Pouliot, Gilles	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	ND	
Preston, Peter L.	Brant-Haldimand	PC	
Pupatello, Sandra	Windsor-Sandwich	L	
Ramsay, David	Timiskaming	L	

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Quinte	PC	
Ross, Lillian	Hamilton West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.	Leeds-Grenville	PC	Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Ruprecht, Tony	Parkdale	L	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob	Mississauga West / -Ouest	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (Privatisation)
Saunderson, William	Eglinton	PC	
Sergio, Mario	Yorkview	L	
Shea, Derwyn	High Park-Swansea	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Sheehan, Frank	Lincoln	PC	
Silipo, Tony	Dovercourt	ND	deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Skarica, Toni	Wentworth North / -Nord	PC	
Smith, Bruce	Middlesex	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John	Mississauga North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Spina, Joseph	Brampton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.	Carleton	PC	Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stewart, R. Gary	Peterborough	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris	Etobicoke West / -Ouest	PC	Speaker / Président
Tascona, Joseph N.	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	PC	
Tilson, David	Dufferin-Peel	PC	
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.	Markham	PC	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David	York Mills	PC	Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement
Vankoughnet, Bill	Frontenac-Addington	PC	
Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble	S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	PC	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Wettlauffer, Wayne	Kitchener	PC	
Wildman, Bud	Algoma	ND	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim	Simcoe West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth	Waterloo North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Wood, Bob	London South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général
Wood, Len	Cochrane North / -Nord	ND	
Young, Terence H.	Halton Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Vacant	Nickel Belt		

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Alvin Curling, Carl DeFaria, Gary Fox, Ernie Hardeman,
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Mushinski, Peter North, Gilles Pouliot, Joseph N. Tascona
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Dominic Agostino, Marcel Beaubien, Douglas B. Ford,
Helen Johns, Allan K. McLean, Trevor Pettit,
Sandra Pupatello, Bill Vankoughnet, Len Wood
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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Richard Patten
Marcel Beaubien, Bernard Grandmaître, Bill Grimmett,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Shelley Martel, Richard Patten,
Peter L. Preston, Joseph N. Tascona, Terence H. Young
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Regulations and private bills / Règlements et projets de loi privés

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Dave Boushy
Toby Barrett, Dave Boushy, David Caplan,
Ernie Hardeman, Gary L. Leadston, Tony Martin,
Tony Ruprecht, Derwyn Shea, Frank Sheehan,
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Resources development / Développement des ressources

Chair / Présidente: Brenda Elliott
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Peter L. Preston
David Christopherson, Ted Chudleigh, Sean G. Conway,
Brenda Elliott, Doug Galt, John Hastings, Pat Hoy,
Bart Maves, Peter L. Preston
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczkowski

Social development / Affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Annamarie Castrilli
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Dwight Duncan
Toby Barrett, Marion Boyd, Jack Carroll, Annamarie Castrilli,
Alex Cullen, Dwight Duncan, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees,
Lyn McLeod, Lillian Ross, Bruce Smith
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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